SERMONS
BY
CANON SHEBBEARE

William Robert Leehan

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SERMONS

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SERMONS

P. A. CANON SHEEHAN, D.D.

EDITED BY M. J. PHELAN, S.J.

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✠ PATRICK J. HAYES, D.D.,
Archbishop of New York.

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PREFACE

The reading public, especially in Ireland, will readily admit that the world has grown very lonesome since Canon Sheehan died.

The newspaper announcement, "A new work by Canon Sheehan," always filled us with pleasant anticipations.

Those pages of polished, elevated thought and racy humor; those pictures of national life where as a critic beautifully remarks, he showed the power "of twisting the charm of Irish character out of his paragraphs like the odor of thyme when it is rolled between the fingers": these, so far from satisfying, but whetted our appetites for more.

Hence we have good reason to thank his executor for giving us an opportunity of once more enjoying the society of a man who charmed while he raised us up.

With the novelist, the essayist, and the poet, we are already acquainted; in this volume we meet him in a character entirely new: Canon Sheehan the preacher.

The modest pastor of Doneraile would be the last to claim the title: "orator." Yet his readers must have observed how often the pent-up tide of genuine eloquence burst forth and overflowed his pages.

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Instances of this may be seen in "The Intellectuals," page 359, where he makes a whole-hearted defense of the Gaelic revival and a withering onslaught on the curses of anglicization, in the sublime apostrophe of Geoffrey Austin in "The Triumph of Failure," page 333, and the immortal sermon he puts into the mouth of Doctor Grey.

The same loosened tide frequently breaks through the surface in the pages now before the reader.

The public need not be told that his leading feature was his priestly character and cast of mind; as a priest alone he speaks here, hence the unaffected outpouring of his inmost heart.

He never strains after effect or turns aside to pursue a flight of imagery or a musical cadence; from first to last his sole concern is to send home the sacred truth with which he is charged.

From his manuscripts it is evident he carefully wrote his sermons from the very first, and the minute exactness and care so characteristic of the man are evident in every page.

It was a happy accident that sent him for the first years on the English mission. The presence of Protestants, converts and critics amongst his audience made him cautious and laborious, and helped to bring out all that was best in him.

Yet his early efforts, while smooth and graceful, are timid, and want that courage that comes with conscious mastery of the subject.

The keen analysis of the human heart, the wealth of knowledge, the fecundity of ideas, and, more remarkable still, the richness of imagination, lingered tardily in their early growth, but

finally came with a rush as he approached middle life. Hence in making selections for publication many of his earlier sermons are omitted.

While this book is going through the press it has been discovered that many more of his sermons are scattered through the *Homiletic Monthly;* steps will be taken to include the best of these in the second volume.

In presenting this collection of Canon Sheehan's sermons to his numerous admirers a debt of gratitude and a labor of love is discharged by his devoted friend—the Editor.

M. J. Phelan, S.J.

St. Francis Xavier's,
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SERMONS ON OUR LORD

Preparing for Christmas

The mission of the Baptist was a two-fold one—to announce to the world the advent of its Redeemer, and to prepare the world to receive Him worthily. He had to announce to the world that the time of the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies was at hand; and as the fulfilment of those prophecies involved the coming of the Eternal God among men, to be revealed to them in the flesh and to dwell among them, it was becoming that a way should be prepared for Him, that He might have an easy ingress to the hearts of men.

The herald of God was a herald of heaven and not of earth. He had not a single mark of earthly royalty about him. The credentials of his ambassadorship were the sanctity of his life and the supernatural doctrines which he taught.

He announced the approach of a spiritual King, and in all things he was worthy of that King whose legate he was. His locusts and wild honey compare well with the long fasts of our Blessed Lord; the garments of wild beasts with which he was clothed were a fitting type of the swaddling-clothes that swathed the limbs of the Infant Redeemer; the wilderness, in which he was the voice of God, was not more desolate than the stable in which the Eternal Word was born; and the bap-

tism of penance unto the remission of sins which he preached is the same doctrine our Divine Lord so frequently inculcated, and of the practice of which He has left us a mighty example in that baptism of Blood which He underwent for the remission of the sins of the world.

Yet, though the stern teaching of John might lead one to believe that he was preparing men for the final judgment rather than for the coming of the Redeemer of the world, I have no doubt he felt the same joy at the advent of the long-expected Messias that the kings and prophets who foretold that coming would have experienced had they lived.

He speaks as if it were a stern Judge were coming among men instead of a merciful Redeemer. He speaks as if he believed that the souls of men were to be subjected to a searching trial, instead of which God was about to turn away His eyes from their sins, until the blood of His Son would have washed them all, and they could be presented fair and cleansed in the Father's sight. And yet John, in the very same breath in which he threatened sinners: "Do penance or you will all likewise perish," could tell the world that he announced to it tidings of great joy. And although with that almost angry anxiety with which zealous souls seek to wean men from their sins, he exhorted, prayed, and threatened, we cannot doubt but that he felt at the prospect of seeing the Lamb who was to take away the sins of the world the same pulsations of joy and gladness that are throbbing in the heart of Christendom at this time.

Why all this sorrow in face of so much joy?

All this mourning in the face of such a triumph? Ask the Church of God. She has copied John to the letter. She tells us, too, that Christmas is a time of much joy—a day to be remembered to the end of time with feelings of joy and self-congratulation and gratitude to God; she hails the coming of the Infant Savior with canticles of praise, and songs of jubilee; she will tell us: "Rejoice and be glad, O Sion, for great is He who is in the midst of thee, the holy one of Israel!" yet she has put us into mourning; we wear the purple garment of penance, the altars are stripped, she bids us fast, and now that we are drawing nearer the great event she makes us redouble our fasts; nay, the very Eve of Christmas is a day of fasting and of prayer and of penance. The world outside is heaping up its creature comforts for that day, determined to press into that day as much happiness as the human heart can hold; men whose hearts are burdened with care and anxiety look forward with pleasure to that day, when even their little worldly ambitions, the motive principles of their lives, will cease to affect them, and they will step down from the treadmill of life to enjoy a little breathing-time; that day is a day of jubilee for the entire world.

Why, then, is the Church of God in mourning? Is it that the Church has no sympathy with human joy and friendship? Does she look coldly and with disdain on the ways of men, and their efforts to satisfy the claims of the human heart for happiness during the present life, as Heaven exists only for them in the future? No! but the reason of these fasts and abstinences and mourn-

ings is to be sought in the fact that the mission of the Church is a spiritual one.

As John anticipated the mission of Jesus, so does the Church continue it; as John prepared the souls of men for the visible coming of our Divine Lord by preaching to them penance, the Church prepares the souls of her children for the commemoration of that visible Advent and the spiritual birth of the same Divine Lord in their souls by forcing penance upon them, and preaching to them the necessity of prayer.

For it is no earthly event we celebrate: it is an event that in the eyes of the world looked as mean and contemptible as can well be imagined; and all its transcendent glory is derivable from the spiritual world, and the light of revelation which shines around it, and which shows us in that apparently unimportant event a mystery of infinite significance, and one that is to influence the eternal spiritual interests of men. That event, therefore, affects us in no worldly way; it affects our immortal souls, and therefore our preparation for Christmas and our celebration of Christmas must be spiritual, if either one or the other would be worthy of the mystery of the Incarnate God. And, therefore, to make of Christmas a mere carnival of eating and drinking and sensuality is to degrade the holiest mystery of God into a merely human event; to celebrate the birth of Christianity and its Divine Founder by pagan revels.

But I must not be understood to say that the Church either forbids or discountenances human enjoyment. No! spiritualized though she be, hu-

manity has not gone out of her; and she sees with pleasure that spiritual joy which animates all Christian hearts at this time overflow and vent itself in those expressions of feeling that are conventional amongst mankind. Nay, she brings to our feasts a luxury daintier than any human heart can furnish, the luxury of kind hearts, sanctified by Christian sympathy and clear consciences, purified by penance. Kind hearts, which even constant exposure to the chilling influences of the world cannot freeze or harden; hearts that can appreciate the love of God for men, and soften at the remembrance of that love as shown in Bethlehem; and that can show that love by sympathy with the poor, whom Christ has identified with Himself. And clear consciences, that owe no debt to God but gratitude, and none to men but love; consciences that enjoy that peace which the Infant God brought upon earth to impart to men of good-will—peace which the world cannot give, and of which the world knows nothing.

For the Church understands well, and it is a truism that needs no proof, that a smiling face is a ghastly sight when the heart is corroded by care; and surely there is no care in this world at all to be compared with the consciousness that we are in sin—that we are the enemies of God, and that it is God's mercy alone, which is very great while it lasts, but which may cease at any moment, that saves us from a fate it is quite appalling to think of. You would think it an excess of cruelty to ask a drowning man to sing; but to wish a "Happy Christmas" to a man in mortal sin is just as bitter mockery.

And this is the reason that during Advent the Church invites her children to penance. Perhaps if there were not so much sin in the world her discipline would be different. But as she numbers among her children the wayward, the obstinate and the indifferent, and as she would have all, without exception or distinction, enter into her spirit on this great feast, the jubilee day of Christianity, and as that spirit is a spirit of gladness and rejoicing and gratitude to God, and as there can be no gladness or joy while sin holds possession of the soul, therefore the Church of God would have us cleanse ourselves from sin in the Sacrament of Penance, and by fasting, mortification, and prayer create within ourselves, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, a reason for rejoicing in the consciousness that we are the friends of God.

This, then, is the order of things as established by God Himself—to suffer with Christ, to rejoice with Christ. To be crucified with Christ—that we rise with Christ. To be conformed to the likeness of Christ by suffering here, that we may be conformed to the likeness of Christ in glory hereafter. To die unto ourselves that we live unto God. And so the most fitting preparation for Christmas, the season of festivity, is Advent, the season of penance.

But there is a higher and a holier reason still for preparing for Christmas in a spirit of penance. On that great feast, or at least during the season, the Church invites all her children to approach the holy table of the Lord. At one time, in ages more blessed than ours, it was no invitation, it was a solemn command, enforced by pain-

ful penalties. These were the golden ages of Christianity, ages of strong faith, and deep, heartfelt, personal love, and childlike confidence and obedience. Ours is an iron age, when the light of the Holy Spirit of God has died from the minds of men, and the love of God is dead and cold; and so the Church of God is forced to adapt her discipline to the times. And so she no longer imperatively commands her children to approach the Holy Communion at Christmas; and yet her request to every true Catholic heart must sound even more strongly than any command. Besides there is a command that changes not with times nor seasons nor the humors and caprices of men: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you."

Now, the Blessed Sacrament is the constant presence of Bethlehem among us. The likeness is so remarkable that it must have occurred to every mind that has given the least thought to the things of God. The humility of God, assumed to win our love, is in both the same.

In Bethlehem, He was hidden under the form of an infant: here He is hidden under the form of the Host. The stable and the Tabernacle are much the same in the eyes of the Eternal God. There He was laid in a manger as if about to become the food of beasts: here he is laid in the ciborium in order to become the food of sinners. The Star brought the wise men to the cave: the little lamp indicates His presence here, and it is wise men only that see it. And wiser still are they who can appreciate the love that has veiled the Eternal God under the humble species of His

Sacrament, by corresponding with that love, by worthy and devout communion—by reproducing Bethlehem in their souls, and permitting the Eternal God to be born anew in their hearts. And so, if you would at all celebrate this great feast of Christmas worthily, you will approach the Holy Communion. Holy Communion must be the one great event of the day. Christmas would not have been if Christ had not been born in Bethlehem. Christmas will not be Christmas for you if you turn your backs coldly on the sacrament of His Love.

But if we are to repeat Bethlehem in our souls, let it be Bethlehem without its poverty. Jesus and Mary and Joseph must be there; and with our best efforts our souls will be scarcely more worthy to receive the Eternal God than was the manger in which He was laid. But then as God will come, we must receive Him as best we may. If we had known that cave outside the walls of Bethlehem before it was consecrated by the birth of our Divine Lord; if we had seen its walls of rocks, jagged and dripping with the cold rains of winter, if we had trodden upon its floor, rugged and damp, and seen the manger with its rough straw, and the beasts that sheltered themselves there, and if one of God's angels told us of the event that would take place there on Christmas night, would we be Christian, would we be even human, would we not deserve the eternal reprobation of men and angels, if, knowing and seeing all this, we made no preparation to receive the Eternal God, and left that cave unsightly and bare and cold, exposed to the blasts of winter, and ten-

anted by beasts. Not less guilty will we be if, knowing our own poverty, we make no preparation to receive worthily the same Eternal God who comes to our souls in the Holy Communion. Therefore let us prepare for God a birthplace that will become His sanctity better than Bethlehem, and let us dispense with two at least of the accompaniments of Bethlehem. No coldness, no frostiness, no indifference, and no beasts—not even a single venial sin.

This, then, is the second and principal reason of the austerities and mortifications of Advent, that God is coming to dwell in us, and it behooves us to prepare a way for the Lord, to prepare a fitting dwelling place for Him in our souls. And how shall we prepare a fit dwelling place for Him, except by manifesting His Life in our bodies. And as that Life was essentially a Life of penance and sorrow and suffering, we must necessarily be penitential and mortified, and sorrowful like Him and crucified in our own flesh. Crucified above all to sin.

"Make straight the paths of the Lord. Every valley shall be filled." The deep, low-lying valleys which sin has hollowed out in our souls, those deep abysses which bad habits have made in order that they may hide themselves in them, and give full play to the worst propensities of our nature; those deep valleys where the foul lusts, and the bitter envies, and the secret malignities, and the other sins which we hide away, and are quite ashamed to acknowledge, even to ourselves, exist unchecked, nay, even are fostered and encouraged; these deep valleys must be filled and

cleansed, and everything that is vile in them must be swept away before we shall have prepared a fitting dwelling place for God. Surely you will not invite the Immaculate God to stain Himself by entering in your souls until those souls be well garnished and swept of everything foul and unhealthy.

"And every mountain and hill shall be brought low." Those high mountains of pride and earthly ambition, pride in wealth, pride in position, pride in talents and abilities, must be leveled, cut away remorselessly, before He, who was meek and humble of heart, shall enter into our souls. Oh, surely! my dearly beloved, one look at that cave of Bethlehem, one glance at the Eternal God, changed by His own humility into the weakest of His creatures, a little, weeping, trembling, helpless Babe, ought to be quite sufficient to kill all the pride of the world for evermore.

"And the crooked shall be made straight." The false, distorted conscience that sees good in evil, the blind conscience that knows not the malice of sin, nor the sanctity of God, must be rectified and enlightened, must be taught to see the beauty of goodness, and the hideousness of guilt, the defilement of sin, and the holiness of God, in whose sight the slightest sin is an unspeakable horror.

"And the rough ways must be made plain."

Christmas Eve

To those who truly love our Divine Lord the reflection of what He has done for His own and the Father's glory must be always a source of pride and consolation. The mighty empire of Christianity over which He now rules is an everlasting memorial of His majesty and power; He was the founder of that Kingdom, and is its everlasting King. He built it with His own hands, and now presides over it, and His eternal existence, His Immortality, is a sure pledge that His Kingdom, too, is eternal.

We belong to that Kingdom of Christ; we are His subjects, or, rather, He has made us sharers in His royalty and participators in His sovereignty. And the dignity of our own position raises in our minds a sense of the dignity of our Master and Savior, and, contemplating the many ancient and recent glories of Christianity, we are not self-glorified by our exaltation, but loving adorers of Christ, who is the Author and Source of every happiness we possess.

Now, the establishment of Christ's Kingdom was a mighty moral revolution. It was accomplished by the destruction and removal of kingdoms and dynasties that seemed more firmly established than any earthly kingdom in these days. It supplanted systems of paganism that had been growing and developing for centuries, and ef-

fected in an incredibly short space of time a revolution in men's minds—the most swift, the most miraculous, and the most lasting that can be well conceived.

There is a history in the simple words of the Evangelist St. Luke that contains in it more meaning, more food for study than all other histories that have ever been written. "There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. And Joseph went up from Galilee to the City of David which is called Bethlehem to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife." Could there be a vaster distance in rank, in earthly dignity, in power, in wealth, than then existed between the persons mentioned in this text. Augustus and Joseph—Augustus, Emperor of Emperors, and Joseph the poorest of his subjects. Augustus, whose name was known throughout the world; Joseph who was not known even in his little village. Augustus, whose merest caprice was a law, who possessed every luxury that an Emperor's will could extort or the gold of his princely city could procure, and Joseph and Mary begging their way across Judea to satisfy his ambition. Who but God Himself could foresee that the Child of that poor woman should hold the imperial scepter of Augustus when He had conquered Rome, and put Himself not only above the Emperor but in the place of the very gods whom the Emperor adored.

At this time, a hundred different lands, occupied by as many different races, were brought together under the scepter of the imperial unity. The rule of Rome had been growing for centuries;

but it was under the hand of Augustus that it had assumed certain chosen limits, and began to govern subject provinces under one fixed idea. At this time it extended over Europe, Asia and Africa. It was limited on the north by the Danube, the Rhine, and the Euxine Sea; it extended to the east as far as the Euphrates; on the south it was bounded by the impassable depth of Africa; on the west it had stopped on the brink of the ocean. And it comprised countries and provinces inhabited by races each dissimilar to the other in language, in customs, and each worshiping its own gods, which were acknowledged and sanctioned as national divinity for the several countries within which they were locally established.

If a record were kept of this census which Augustus ordered, it would be found that in the empire of Rome there were established and acknowledged by law ten distinct idolatrous systems. They possessed temples, rites, estates, priests, and self-government, and their worship was legal. There were all forms of polytheistic idolatry; they adored multitudes of gods. They divided the attributes of the One true God, and adored such attributes under the form of imaginary gods and goddesses, whose statues were set up in their temples and adored with supreme worship. There were the gods of Rome, and those of the Hellenic race; the Gallic and the Germanic gods; the Phrygian; the Syrian and the Arabian; the Phœnician, Libyan, and Egyptian gods. And they were worshiped with an intensity of devotion, such that we can scarcely find a parallel for it in the Kingdom of Christ and of Truth. Little images of

the gods were everywhere; homage was paid to them at every table by libations; every street had its statues of Mercury and the serpents; in the Forum there were feasts in honor of the gods; the shops, taverns, and manufactories had little altars, on which wine and incense were offered to them; they put idolatrous emblems on the foreheads of the dead, on their funeral pyres, on their tombs. The places of amusement were specially dedicated to the gods; the theaters had representations in honor of them, the amphitheater was consecrated to them, and, as being so, Tertullian called it "the temple of all the demons."

The whole life of the Romans was filled with invocations, prostrations, purifications, and even in the very smallest concerns, hundreds of gods had prayer and sacrifices offered to them, and their votaries were remarkably scrupulous that not one of their names should be omitted. The expense of victims to be offered in sacrifice was a frightful tax upon the State. On the accession of Caligula, it was reckoned that 160,000 animals, chiefly oxen, were sacrificed throughout the Roman Empire in token of universal joy. On the most trifling occasions, the auspices were to be consulted; the least phenomena in Nature threw senate and people into a paroxysm of terror—eclipses, shooting stars, showers of earth or ashes, mice gnawing the golden vessels in the temple, bees swarming on a public place, a temple struck by lightning—such events as these were sufficient to throw a city and kingdom into the greatest consternation.

And this frightful idolatry had moral effects,

the most revolting and inhuman that can be imagined. Vice was deified; the most revolting passions were first personified by gods and then adored. The Divine Ruler of the Universe was worshiped by rites which would sicken with horror the most degraded Christian in our days, and this not in one city alone but throughout the Roman Empire—throughout a hundred nations and a hundred million people.

And we were not speaking of a savage, uncultured race, but of the people who prided themselves on possessing the choicest civilization of the world. And then we wonder at it, wonder at its palpable contradictions, wonder at its cherished and commanded immoralities, its debasing, national superstitions, its cruelty and sensuality. We find the key to the mystery in the words of St. Paul, and the words of His Divine Master, that this Kingdom of idolatry was the kingdom which, since the fall of Adam, the devil had been elaborating, and which he had now brought to perfection—the Kingdom of the "ruler of this world," the power of darkness; the might of the enemy who holds the power of death, the ancient serpent who leads into error the whole world, "that malignant one in whom the whole world is lying, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who works in the children of disobedience —who masters the principality, the powers, the spirits of wickedness in high places," in a word it was the kingdom of him whom the passions of men and their corrupt blindness had made "god of this world." This manifold idolatry was the establishment of his kingdom—the enthronement

of his godhead over men, the mark of their captivity and prostration before him.

From the time our first parents acknowledged his empire over them, he had spared no pains to retain the complete mastery of the race. The weak sensuousness and pride of Eve, and the sinful compliance of Adam, gave him a guarantee that it needed but little temptation to ensnare the whole human race.

The corruption that had been engendered in the hearts of our first parents would be perpetuated unto all time in the hearts of their children—there would be the same tendency to rebellion against God, the same love of carnal things, the same disgust of spiritual things—the same proneness to evil—the same contempt of virtue—and these fatal inheritances would grow and increase and develop—and the experience of their bitter fruits would not lessen their power, and time would favor the growth—and the intellects and reasons which they blinded would sanction them. Less and less the memory of God would grow—men would remember Adam's sin, but not God's justice—the voice of God would be unheard; the counsel and warning voices of God unheeded; the idea of the true God would vanish—men would no longer obey reason, but the promptings of passion, and the whole world would be launched on a career of godlessness and infamy—and this would be the devil's hour and the powers of darkness. This is what the enemy of God foresaw—this is what he labored to accomplish—and this he did accomplish. But God was patiently waiting. Oh! how sublime is the pa-

tience of God. How calmly He looks on the ways of men and on the machinations of devils.

From the watchtowers of Heaven He calmly looks down on this world, tossing to and fro, moved by the passions of men and the silent but awful agency of evil spirits; with patience He hears His Holy Name blasphemed, and His honor dishonored; He allows men to have their way and to transform this fair paradise of His into a howling wilderness where evil spirits riot in wickedness, and men emulate their devil-worship. He seems to abandon the world, to leave it to rot of its own corruption, when suddenly He turns one spring in the machinery of His Universe, one hidden, secret spring, and the whole is transformed. Darkness and wickedness disappear, and the sins that were covered by night; the evil spirits go back to their abodes, and man, untroubled by them, rises to a knowledge of his God and his own exalted mission and destiny.

Christmas Day

We have met to celebrate the greatest feast of the Christian year—to commemorate the greatest event in the history of our race, the appearance of God clothed in human form upon our earth.

It was an event of infinite significance to the world; it was the one event to which the eyes of the saints of the Old Law were turned—the one event which they yearned to behold—and died without beholding, in a kind of despair. And it is the one event to which the eyes of Christians will for ever turn in love and admiration—eager to find fresh wonders in this mystery of mysteries, and fresh revelations of depth after depth of inexhaustible, unfathomable love.

I have said that it was an event of infinite significance, for it was the coming of the Redeemer of a lost world, the Savior of men from a destiny it is appalling to think of. It was the appearance of Him who was the "desired" of the everlasting hills, "whom kings and prophets had yearned to see, but were not able." It was the revelation in visible form of God, that Great Being whose relations with our race had been too wonderful; the advent in a visible, tangible shape, so that He could be seen and heard and touched, of Him, who had created the world, who had punished the world for its sins, who legislated for the

world, all the time hidden away in the invisibility of the spirit, and who was now come to show Himself to the world, and to prove to the world in a way that could not be gainsaid how He had loved men with an everlasting love.

When we look into ourselves, as each one must at some period or other in his life, we are often at a loss to find what it is that God sees in us that He cares so tenderly for us. With our frail perishable bodies, and our souls so stained with sin that the image of God is concealed or obliterated, we think and lose ourselves in thinking, and yet fail to find what attraction we have for God. Yet that God loves us, and yearns for our love in return, is a truth that He has put beyond dispute, a truth that He has proved so that it can never more be doubted, in this great mystery of His Incarnation.

That God should pity us, and that He should therefore reach forth His hand to save us, in spite of all the provocation men have given Him, is a mystery of mercy that becomes intelligible only when we cease to explore it, and consent to think that it is one of the many unintelligible things of God.

But this is another mystery more unintelligible still, unless upon the supposition that God desires the love of men, that, when He might have saved the world by a wish or a word, He chose to work out that salvation Himself by toil and pain. He borrowed a human form, disguised Himself in it, took with Him all His attributes, made Himself a brother to men, and the best of their brethren, and strove to win their love as man, that men

might not cease to love Him, when He would reveal Himself to be God. He saw that though sin had stripped the souls of men of the greatest of those original gifts with which God had endowed them, they still retained a love for sinlessness and innocence.

It was the love for God Himself, for His sanctity and purity, which He had originally implanted in the human heart; but men had forgotten God, and yet the instinct remained, and so they lavished that love upon children, the only types of sinlessness that could be found upon earth. God saw this, and He became a child, that men might bestow upon Him, as a child, that love they would not give Him as God.

He saw, too, that linked with that love for sinlessness and purity there was another love, that never had had for its object God, because God hitherto had not suffered; I mean sympathy with sorrow and misery, the divinest of all divine attributes, and, therefore, reflected from God in the human heart, the most illustrious of all human virtues—sympathy, always the precursor of love. He would become the object of that sympathy, that He might win His way to men's love, and so He became not only an infant, but an infant, poor, outcast, despised—the Infant of the Manger—an infant born amongst beasts in a cave. He saw that, however fallen and degraded men might be, there was a chivalrous feeling among them that respected sanctity in others, a sort of reverential fear of sinlessness, as an attribute of a Being not of their world.

And so He sent a little time before Himself the

holiest and best of creatures—a Queen in every virtue, the meekest, most humble, and purest of maidens, and then He made her His Mother, and laid Himself an Infant in her arms, well knowing that the worship of a fallen world would be paid to her, that the sighs of a despairing world would be addressed to her, and that she whose interests were identified with His would turn over and direct to Him that love and worship of His creatures for which He yearned.

Manly virtue, too, had an attraction for the world—great strength and great meekness, lofty sanctity and profound humility, and around all, and conserving all, immaculate purity—the attribute of angels—and He chose for His foster-father, Joseph, the type of all those virtues, that when men's eyes would be attracted to him, they might fall from Joseph upon Himself.

And thus by the agency of His creatures He would draw all men to Himself, nay, He Himself became a creature, or at least took upon Himself a created form, "emptying Himself, taking the form of a slave, made unto the likeness of men, and in habit found as man," thus leaving no means untried that His Infinite Wisdom could suggest, to secure the happiness of man, asking only the love of man in return.

This is the secret of the Incarnation; and this, too, is its mystery, that, knowing as we do how little man deserved the love of God, and how much God deserves to be loved by men, it is man that is careless about the love of God, whom he needs so much, and God that is anxious to secure the love of men, whom He does not need at all, and

who are, even in their own eyes, a blot upon God's creation.

There have been in this world from time to time strange groupings of persons and circumstances that stand out by themselves from history, and demand exclusively for themselves our attention and interest.

Adam and Eve as they passed through the gate of Paradise into the outer world, burdened with their sin and stooping under the anger of God, and looking with despair at the miseries they had brought upon their race.

Cain, as he stood red-handed over the lifeless body of his brother; Abraham, as he looked into the face of Isaac, whose life, dearer than his own, he was about to give to God; Ishmael and Agar, alone with God in the desert; but neither our first parents under the just anger of God, nor Cain, alone with God after his sin, nor Abraham under trial from God, nor Agar in the desert abandoned by all but God, can have half the interest for us that that little group possesses that turned away from Bethlehem on that December night many years ago—that old man and that young maiden, and that hidden God—and looked at the dark city, every door in which was shut against them, and the long road that stretched into the distance before them, and the prospect, dismal enough at any time, but most dismal to them, of spending the night under the stars of heaven.

It is Saint Joseph that most claims our pity, for on him all the responsibility fell of providing a shelter for Jesus and Mary, and it must have been

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the keenest anguish to him: the sight of their common desolation, and the consciousness of his inability to relieve it. And yet we can understand that in his humility he felt that he was only a passive instrument in the hands of God; whose destiny was not to coöperate with God's decrees, but to be God's agent in accomplishing them; from whom, therefore, was required not active assistance, so much as patient, silent wonder. And a life of wonder his must have been from the hour in which he met Mary, until the angel told him who she was, and his after life was spent amongst miracles; he lived among them, saw them until they grew familiar, and died, with Jesus, the miracle of humility, holding his head, and Mary, miracle of grace, praying at his feet.

And so on this night outside the walls of Bethlehem he wondered what was next in the Divine mind appointed him to do; and wondered, and here we join our surprise to his, what fatality attached to men, that they can find no room for God in their world. No one, I think, believes that the inhospitality of the Bethlemites was culpable, and that first Christmas night there was a great influx of strangers, and they who arrived first had the first claim to be received; and Mary and Joseph came amongst the last, and the inn was full. But is there not some hidden design upon the part of God, or some dreadful fatality fallen upon men, that when God, in fulfilment of irrevocable decrees, was to be born into this world, no human eye should see Him (I except, of course, those who were necessary to the mystery), no human heart should feel for Him, not even the

poor, who are usually sympathetic with kindred misery, were present at His birth; no human habitation offered Him a shelter—the doors were closed out to the very threshold that He may have no room to lie there.

His Mother and her husband alone of all the Nazarenes that came to Bethlehem on that night were houseless and homeless: they could not even remain upon the street, that His Mother might have the comfort of being among men, and that He Himself, when He opened His eyes upon the world, might see the faces of those whom He came to save; but He had to go outside the haunts of men, whither Joseph led Mary, to be born in the midst of darkness, under a rock in a field, with no attendant but the sinless, silent, wondering, irrational beasts. "The Word was made Flesh," says the Evangelist, "and dwelt amongst us,"—made flesh in silence and secrecy, born into the world in silence and secrecy—but not amongst men; but then He came and dwelt amongst us, "and we saw His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," and yet the Evangelist does not fail to tell us further on that though the Incarnate God was full of grace and truth, he was always a burden to the world.

From the beginning men looked coldly on Him, as one that should have no part with them, until at length they grew angry with Him for living, and they beat half the life out of Him in the Hall and then hanged Him on a cross outside their city. Born in a cave outside Bethlehem, died on a cross outside Jerusalem—surely there was no room for God in His world. And this was the

surprise of Joseph, and it has been the surprise of every one of the saints of God from Joseph's time, until now, for it is as true of the world today as it was of Bethlehem nineteen centuries ago —there is no room for God amongst men.

This is the mystery of the Incarnation on the part of men that men should be unconscious of the presence of God among them and should scorn the Divine Love that is squandered upon them. The rest of the mystery is in God, in the humiliation to which He subjected Himself to win the love of men.

Bethlehem has grown so familiar to us that it is no longer a mystery; the accidents and surroundings of the birth of our Divine Lord have ceased to possess that meaning for men they would suggest to one who was made acquainted with the mystery for the first time, and even the expressions that we use to explain the mystery—the vocabulary of Bethlehem, as we might say—have lost half their meaning for us by constant use. "Babe of Bethlehem," "Infant-God," "Child-Saviour," "Word made flesh," are familiar words, each one of which is a history of the greatest wonder this world ever saw; but we use them without ever thinking of what they mean.

So too when we say that our Blessed Redeemer was born in a stable, and laid upon a little straw in a manger, and breathed upon by the cattle, we do not realize the extent of these humiliations. For it is the perversity of our nature that we will not understand the mystery of the Incarnation, will not understand that our Divine Lord was

really God and really man; and so our reverence for Him as God is unjustly abated, for we see His Divinity only through the medium of His manhood; and, on the other hand, our love for Him as man, and the sympathy the consideration of His sufferings creates within us, is diminished by the consideration that He is God, and that His Divinity is proof against suffering. Whereas His Divinity, so far from lessening His sufferings, only intensified them, and though God, He deserves the compassion of the world; and again, though that Divinity is hidden under the vesture of manhood, it is not the less worthy of reverence, than the same Divinity in the Father and the Spirit.

And so the Divinity of the Babe in Bethlehem must not prevent us from sympathizing with His suffering and humiliation; neither must our sympathy and love for Him as an Infant ever lead us to forget the reverence due to Him as God. In what, then, does this mystery of the Babe of Bethlehem consist? What is it in that mystery that excites our wonder, and then our love? It is useless to look upon that mystery from this earth of ours, because we know nothing of what God is, and, therefore, we cannot understand, cannot fathom the depth of humiliation into which He sank when He became man. But let us see what His angels saw upon that night when they filled the universe with their songs.

They came into existence, and as they enjoyed from the first moment the full use of intelligence, their existence from the first moment became a mystery to them. But that mystery was solved

when they fell into their place, and the Vision of God burst upon their sight.

God the Immense, and even to them the Incomprehensible, the Father, the unbegotten, the Son, begotten but from eternity, reflected from the Father's mind, not by a single final act, but by a successive series of acts which never commenced and never will end; the Spirit, proceeding from the love of the Father and Son. And all three one, living in the unutterable love they bear to each other, in a silence that had been unbroken from eternity. The quick intelligence of the angels strove to measure the eternity of God. They themselves were but of yesterday. But there was no yesterday with God, and then they discovered that time was a law of their Being, but not of His. And their minds traveled back, compassing age after age and cycle after cycle of years, and when they had grown weary they stood still, and looked into the past still, expecting to find the beginning of God close at hand, but it was remote as ever, and when they tried to span the distance it was eternity.

And confounded and humiliated they returned, and looked into the face of God, and humbled themselves before Him. And again they strove to measure His immensity. And their quick intelligence fled to the outer bounds of space, and they looked beyond, to find some place where God was not; but space still stretched illimitable before them, and every inch of that space was filled with the immeasurable immensity of God.

And again they returned confounded and humiliated, and looked into the face of God, and

humbled themselves before Him. Day by day they saw new worlds, each a wonder in itself, leap into existence, and fall into a certain orbit from which it never deviated, as if it were held there by an Almighty Hand; and though they knew there could be no cause of these but God, they saw no action on the part of God, not even a motion of His Will. But the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, silent and motionless and unspeakably happy.

One day they found their own ranks very much diminished, more than decimated, large gaps were here and there observable, and they noticed that these whom they missed were the brightest and most beautiful of all the Heavenly Court; and they looked downwards and saw their Brethren; but, oh! how changed, struggling in an omnipotent, invisible grasp that held them fast in the fire of hell; and then they heard of God's attribute of justice and trembled for themselves. They were soon to hear of His mercy and His love. They saw Him create on one of His worlds a soul like themselves, and He covered it with a thin covering of clay, and breathed into it life, and made it a free, intelligent being. And they were horrified to see that the very first act of that being was to offend God; and every moment they expected to see the tragedy of Heaven repeated; and man sent to fraternize in punishment as he had fraternized in rebellion with the fallen angels.

But no: man was punished, yet not as he deserved; nay more, certain promises were made him that sounded unintelligible to the angels—promises of a Redeemer and of a blessing that

would come upon the world through the woman; and as the days rolled on, they found man ever hostile to his Maker, and God so terribly just with the angels, mild and forbearing to men; and when centuries had gone by, they saw that the Spirit of God now again left the Father and the Son, and went upon earth and spoke to certain holy men, and they prophesied that God would save His people, and one of them said that "in the darkness, in the silence of the night, the Almighty Word would leap down from His throne," and they saw the Holy Spirit touching the lips of another with a burning coal, and he said "That a virgin would conceive and bear a Son, and His Name should be called Emmanuel, that is, God with us"; and he would be called Holy Counselor, Prince of Peace, and the Government would be laid upon His shoulders, and then they began to understand that a mystery was in preparation, and that mystery would bind together, in some way to them unknown, God and man.

But who can tell their surprise when Gabriel was called before the Throne of God, and then passed swiftly through the ranks of angels, and the news ran through Heaven that the Son of God was about to leave His Father's bosom and become man; and then they saw the Spirit swiftly descending, and in a moment the Son had left the Father, and the bosom of the Father, filled with that Son from eternity, was for the first time vacant, and Heaven in a manner was changed to earth, for the unchangeable God was changed, and the household of eternity was broken up. How those angels as they watched around Mary dur-

ing the nine months must have wondered and wondered again what their God in human form was likely to be!!! Illimitable God! And their wonder at their own existence, at the attributes of God which surpassed their comprehension, at the justice of God so swiftly and yet so silently executed, did not equal their astonishment when they looked upon that weak, trembling Infant in Mary's arms, and then heard the voice of the Eternal Father that bade them fall down and adore that Infant as God.

It was the first act of Faith the angels had ever made, for hitherto they had seen God; it was Vision, but now they had to believe; and what a demand was made upon their Faith—that this little Infant was the God whom nine months ago they had worshiped in Heaven, and into whose face they scarcely dared to look; that these four planks that made the manger contained the same God, whose immensity they had tried in vain to measure; that these weak arms, clasped and unclasped in utter helplessness were the same that called the mighty worlds through space as if they were only toys, and held down with irresistible power in hell those angels whose strength and power were a wonder to themselves.

But God gave them a clew to the mystery, for when they had satisfied their wonder He revealed to them that it is not justice, nor eternity nor immensity nor power alone that is the law of His Being, but love shown in mercy to His creatures, and in which angels and men have a common share. And it was then when they understood what a link it was that bound earth to Heaven and all

created things to God, that they broke forth into that cantata of praise to God and good wishes to men: "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will."

In the canticle God Himself could join, for to bring peace upon earth was the eternal wish of the Father, and it was the special mission of the Son, and it was to be accomplished by the special agency of the Holy Ghost.

And that wish and that desire, even the coldness and the darkness of Bethlehem, and the indifference of the world, could not stifle in the breast of God. Nor did that Infant Babe, as He lay there in that manger at Bethlehem and looked back to His Father's bosom in Heaven, feel one pang of sorrow for having left His Father, nor one wish to return, nor a single doubt but that His mission would be successful.

Nor has He been disappointed. Even in Bethlehem He had made conquests, and surely He had only to look on Mary and Joseph, the first fruits of His victory, that He might hope well for the future. And the sweet influence of that Infant Savior still survives in the world, is still felt, and must be felt for ever. For ever will His Divine mind illuminate those whom He will save; for ever will His Divine Heart quicken into love those whom He has chosen for Himself.

You yourselves give a proof of what I say. To you the influence of the Babe of Bethlehem has reached. That King of the Manger holds you captive. From every soul here to-day He has looked up into His Father's face, and again and again repeated that His mission on earth is ac-

complished. For His peace has rested upon you all: that Holy Peace which like the peace of Bethlehem is broken only by the whispers of God in your souls, and may that holy peace and He who creates it abide with you for ever!

On Time—New Year's Day

ANOTHER long span of life is passed for each of us, one of those multitudes of moments which men call years is at an end, and again it is my duty to remind you of a few solemn truths, which, if not periodically meditated upon, very soon lose their vast solemnity and significance.

Wherever I go, and to whomsoever I speak, I hear one remark from every lip—"How short this past year has been?" "I can scarcely credit it." Christmas and the New Year have stolen upon us, and taken us by surprise; and I mention this fact to tell you that your experience of life at the moment of death will be the same as your experience of each succeeding year at its close, for from the lips of every dying man, no matter how prepared for death, no matter how eagerly he expected it, we hear the same opinions of life that we hear now of the old dying year: "How short! how fleeting! how swiftly death has come upon me! how rapidly time and life have passed away from me!" I would, therefore, ask your attention this evening to a few thoughts which I shall put before you on the value and importance of time, and the best way of utilizing it.

Like Life itself, I consider time one of these privileges of God, which will be for each of us, and not only will be, but actually is, the greatest of all blessings, or the most frightful of all curses. Like life itself, it was thrust upon us by Almighty

God, and however disposed to abuse it, we cannot rid ourselves of it. It is the talent which God has forced upon our acceptance, and with it the responsibility of profiting by it—a responsibility which we may deem very irksome and even refuse to fulfill, but which we can never decline. It is ours.

Time flies by us, we live by time, we cannot rid ourselves of it, nor of the responsibilities which it entails. If we profit by it, it will be well with us at the end. If we fail to profit by it, we shall go before our Judge, not only with empty hands, holding up a life unfruitful, but also with the grave sin resting upon our souls, that we have abused Heaven's greatest gift, that we have had a glorious inheritance, but have been spendthrifts and prodigals of that, one moment of which no gold, no earthly labor, no human sacrifice could purchase.

Time is that golden river, ever rushing into eternity, in which we stand, and with which we are borne. Itself is golden, the sands in its depths are golden, the very spume and foam of time are golden. For a moment it rests around us, as if to give us an opportunity of gathering up its treasures, the next moment it is gone, and so much of time is lost; we are nearer to death, but not nearer to God.

Time is an angel, borne by us on wings of light, and every moment is a whisper to us asking us have we any message for the ears of God. The ears of God are ever open to hear our prayers; to hear what message of love our hearts send to Him.

What a pain it must be to Almighty God that hundreds, that thousands, that millions of these Divine Ambassadors pass by His throne, after they have questioned us, and as each passes God asks: "Is there a word from that soul of praise, of thanksgiving, a sigh for mercy or a prayer for help," and those swift moments answer "None," and millions of them answer "None," and are lost behind the throne of God in eternity. And each moment, thus past, is irrevocable, and the loss of a single moment is irreparable.

There is no such thing as retracing our steps. There is no such thing as recalling lost moments. It is possible that the sins of years may be wiped out by a moment's repentance. It is possible that the one last moment of our lives, profited by, may atone for years of abuse and loss.

Blessed for ever be the Precious Blood of our Divine Lord. It buys for us eternity even when we have squandered time. But yet all that time is really lost. The stores of merit we might have accumulated during those years are lost; we gain Heaven, but the light with which God crosses us is faint and dim instead of being intensified into burning brightness by our merits. Like a man snatched from a violent death, we tremble and creep in terror to the feet of God, instead of rising buoyantly, securely, confidently, to that throne which the Precious Blood has purchased for us, and which we have adorned with the gold of our penance and the pearls of our contrite tears.

It is this consideration which makes time to my mind such a fearful privilege. There is a dreadful inequality in importance between our good

deeds and our bad deeds. Our good deeds will not of themselves save us. One evil action, or even an evil thought, may banish us for ever from God. A good deed does not of itself remit even a single sin. But one bad action annuls and cancels a whole life of virtue. With this awful consideration before our minds, how is it possible that men should be so careless about utilizing their time, so that every moment profited by in time, may bear golden interest in eternity; and should be on the other hand so indefatigable in laying up for themselves measure upon measure of wrath against the time to come.

The true Christian, who on the one hand sincerely loves Almighty God and fears to offend Him, and on the other hand feels keenly his own imperfection, his weakness and proneness to sin, must ardently long for death as an only deliverance from himself and that Body of Death which tempts him to sin. But such a man, so long as he possesses life will be daily and hourly on his guard lest he should offend his Maker, and despite his repeated falls, he remains in God's friendship and love, because his life is a protest against sin, against the abuse of time, and a declaration of devotedness to his Maker.

They, therefore, who squander time are the greatest of spendthrifts. When we hear now and again of young noblemen of vast properties squandering their riches upon pleasures, lavishing upon the vicious and the worthless the wealth that, perhaps, has been accumulated by the labors of their ancestors for many generations, we

think such extravagance worthy rather of our indignation than of our pity. It is a painful thing, even to outsiders, even to those who have no personal interest in such matters, to see broad, baronial acres, planted with stately trees, old as England itself, pass away into the hands of money-lending, usurious Jews, and the noble mansion closed, and the chalk of the auctioneer on antique furniture and ancestral paintings, and the name, that has been built up with the blood of many heroes, passing into oblivion, and the heir to all those splendors passing into the army as a private, or into a mercantile establishment as a clerk. All this is painful.

And yet time is an inheritance that outweighs all those splendors, and he who squanders time, gives that inheritance not into the hands of Jews, but into the hands of devils. It was an inheritance purchased for him by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and the worthless spendthrift passes into eternity, degraded, poor, condemned by God and Angels and men.

To-night, therefore, let us examine with care how we have spent not only the past year but our lives. Have we valued time? Have we valued life? What wealth, what treasures, have we laid up for ourselves in Heaven? How much time have we given to God? How much to the world? How much to the service of the devil? Oh! the very best of us must confess that the world and the devil have had the lion's share; that it is with God alone we are grudging and miserly. How many of us here can honestly say that we have

given the whole of the past year to God? How many that they have given him a half, a quarter, an eighth?

Let us confess it, that all we have given to God is ten minutes at morning, ten at night, a half hour on Sunday, and the rest to ourselves and the world around us. And yet, if only to-night we have gained a true feeling of remorse for all our ill-spent time, if only now we feel that after all our labors in the burden of the day and the heat, we are poor because our work was not for God, then I declare that our sin is great indeed. Remorse is unprofitable only in hell. It is at all times bitter. But it is a true teacher. I pity the man who is self-satisfied in this world, who is too proud to examine himself, too blind to detect his faults, too puffed up by conceit to confess that he is human, who lives a life of self-complacency, and never hears the bitter warnings of remorse. But there is something truly sublime about the soul, that in a good heart, and a very good heart, is ever striving to be better, is ever dissatisfied with itself. Such a soul has high ideas about its dignity and vocation, such a soul is honorable towards God, is humble, and, therefore, sincere, is perpetually inquiring how something better is to be done, how God's honor is to be promoted, how faults are to be avoided—and such a soul in the sight of God and every right-thinking man is worth fifty million of those proud, puffed up, Pharisaical hypocrites who go about the world satisfied that they are justified, when in reality God has abandoned them. If, therefore, to-night we feel remorse for our remiss-

ness during the past year, it proves, at least, that we are sincere, and to the sincere man all things are possible. The present is yet in our power and the future. There are some here to-night beginning life, there are some in the prime of manhood, and a few whose heads are bleached by years, but there is time still for all, time to expiate the past, time to secure the future, time for the great business of all our lives; promoting the great glory of God.

There is much wisdom in the advice of the Saint: "Go down to Hell during life that you may not go there after death." Perhaps time is properly appreciated truly only by God in Heaven and the lost souls in Hell. Oh! if we could only regard time in the same light in which it is regarded by those who wail out their ineffectual remorse in the deaf ears of God, what saints we might be! Only a day, only an hour, only a passing minute—they would give a million of worlds to possess it—but their wishes are vain. Only a day of those many days that we spend in idling, in gossiping, in vanity, only a minute in all that important time that we waste without scruple—they, if they could possess such a treasure, oh, how they would profit by it. What love, what contrition, what fervor would they press into these moments. How they would hang on the feet of God, and pour out their whole souls before Him, and thank Him for all eternity.

The Epiphany—Call of the Wise Men

"We have seen His star in the East, and have come to adore Him."

We are celebrating to-day the commencement of the fulfillment of the second part of the mission of Christ upon earth, that is, to give peace to men. The angels of God who sang at His Birth declared what the mission of Christ was to be, at the same time that they prayed for its happy results, and so their canticle on that first Christmas night was a prayer and a prophecy; a prayer for the success of the mission of the Infant God; and it was a prophecy that that mission should not be barren of fruit. And they were right. For Christ, at the first moment of His Incarnation, had given more glory to the Father than had yet been received from all creatures; and the coming of the Wise Men from the East to the Crib of the Child, their promptitude in obeying the call of Divine Grace, and their happiness, consequent as a reward of their obedience, was the fulfillment of the second part of the mission of Jesus: "to bring peace to men of good-will on earth."

Before we proceed to make any moral reflections on this great event of the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, we will briefly review one or two historical questions that are suggested by the Gospel of the Day. And first, Christ was born in Bethlehem of Juda, that the prophecy of

Micheas might be fulfilled: "And thou, Bethlehem, Ephrata, art a little one among the thousand of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto me, that is to be the Ruler in Israel: and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity." And it was befitting that as David was born in Bethlehem, David's successor and the restorer of his kingdom should also be born there. The flower that was to ascend from the root of Jesse was to spring from the same soil.

The Bethlehem that is spoken of here is called by the Evangelist the Bethlehem of Juda to distinguish it from another Bethlehem that was in the territory of the tribe of Zebulon. Some manuscripts read Bethlehem of Judea, but St. Jerome thinks it a vicious reading, inasmuch as Judea meant the whole country occupied by the twelve tribes, and as it is evident the Evangelist intended to introduce a distinction this could only have been done by distinguishing the Bethlehem of Juda from the Bethlehem of Zebulon.

The Herod that is spoken of here is not the tetrarch of Galilee, who was surnamed Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist and mocked our Divine Lord; nor is it the Herod that put St. James to death, and put St. Peter in prison: but the father of this latter, and the grandfather of the former. He was called Herod the First, Herod the Great, Herod Antipater, and he was the first to whom the Roman people gave the title, "King of the Jews." He is here called King to distinguish him from Herod the tetrarch, and to show besides that the scepter had passed from Juda, and the time for the coming of the Messias

had expired according to the prophecy: "The scepter shall not be taken away from Judah, till He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation of nations."

There are various opinions among commentators as to who those wise men were, whence they came, and how many there were. If it be supposed that St. Matthew wrote in Hebrew, and that this word has not been interpolated by others, these wise men were conjurors, but as this profession has always been regarded as infamous, and as St. Matthew here evidently mentions the wise men in an honorable manner, this interpretation has been unanimously rejected. If we suppose that St. Matthew wrote in Greek, we shall find there are three interpretations of the Greek word *magos,* and one of these we shall adopt. It meant those who were skilled in magic, like the conjurors that disputed with Moses at the Court of Pharao. Secondly, it is the name not of a profession nor condition, but of a nation. For among the five nations that occupied Media, Epiphanius mentions the Magi as one, and says that they were the descendants of Abraham and Cethusa, who, having been banished from their father's house, came into Magodia, a part of Arabia, there fixed their habitation, and thence derived their name. The most common meaning, however, of the word is that which we translate it, "wise men," and thus the position of the Magi among the Persians was analogous to that which the philosophers held in Greece, the augurs and Pontiffs in Rome, the Brahmins in India, the Chaldeans in Babylonia, the Hierophants in Egypt,

and the Druids in France, England, Ireland, and all the Western nations.

A still more disputed point is as to whether the Magi were kings. Bega, one of the Reformers, ridiculed the idea, and the application to the wise men of that verse of the Psalmist: "The Kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents: the Kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts." But the great weight of testimony inclines us to the belief that they were kings, not as we understand the word, but in the sense of petty princes, such as the ruler in the Gospel of St. John, and the friends of Job who came to console him.

The opinion is confirmed by the facts narrated of them in the Gospel, that they came from the East, a long journey which men of science dependent on their private means could scarcely undertake; that they came to adore the new-born king, which kings alone were accustomed to do; that they brought valuable treasures with them; that they were not seized nor imprisoned by Herod, which argues their dignity; that they proclaimed boldly to Herod the mission upon which they had come, which they would have scarcely dared to do if they had not been of equal dignity with him.

Nor does the reticence of St. Matthew argue against the supposition; for we find that in the Book of Job, his friends who came to comfort him are not called kings, yet they are called kings in the Book of Tobias. Besides, there was a reason for St. Matthew calling them "wise men" instead of kings, inasmuch as he tells us it was by the

star they were led, and kings are not generally supposed to waste much time on the study of the heavens.

Of the number of the wise men and of the country whence they came, there exists equal uncertainty. Many of the early commentators thought they came from Arabia, interpreting thus the prophecy of David: "The Kings of Arabia and of Saba will bring gifts." Many others say they were Chaldeans, but the more common opinion is that they were from Persia, inasmuch as the word "Magi" is Persian, and the custom of making long journeys to visit Kings and to offer gifts is purely Persian, and perhaps exclusively so.

Of the nature of the star which the wise men saw, it is difficult to determine anything positive: whether it was one of the planets, freed by God for a time from its orbit to accomplish its ends, or whether it was a comet and only the semblance of a star, or whether it was an angel under the form of a star, or the Spirit of God Himself, are matters of opinion each vested with credibility in a greater or less degree, but of which nothing positive could be defined. And although the wise men had evidently been expecting some such supernatural manifestations of the birth of the Messias, relying probably upon the prophecy of Balaam: "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not near; a star shall rise up from Jacob and a scepter shall spring from Israel," it is evident that it was by the direct illumination of the Holy Spirit they hailed the star as a messenger from the manger of Bethlehem, and promptly and without hesitation obeyed the call of God.

There is a remarkable difference in the way the Messias unveiled Himself to the Jews, and the way He chose to make Himself known to the Gentiles. I class the wise men and their countrymen among Gentiles, for it is usual so to speak of all who, at the time of the birth of our Divine Lord, were not in communion with the Jewish people. And yet they were not Gentiles in the strict sense of the word, for it is evident that they believed in the God of the Jews, and retained many Jewish traditions, especially the prophecies and promises that were made concerning the birth of the Messias. Now, if we take them as a distinct class, as I think we may, holding a middle position between the Jewish people strictly so called and the Gentiles of the West, we shall see that our Divine Lord revealed Himself to these in a way different from the others. The first among the Jews to whom He revealed Himself were shepherds; the first among the Gentiles of the East to whom He revealed Himself were wise men and Kings; He did not reveal Himself to the Gentiles of the West at all at His Birth; and it is strange that the nations of the West are the only ones who have preserved His teachings, and commemorate His Birth in the manger. He revealed Himself to the simplest and the humblest of the Jews personally: He revealed Himself to the Scribes and Doctors of the Law, not personally, but by the faith of the Gentile wise men. And He revealed Himself to the Jews by His Power: He revealed Himself to the Gentiles by Light.

Now, why did our Divine Lord choose "wise men" to reveal Himself to the Gentiles of the

East? It seems to be altogether opposed to His usual mode of acting. He chose the simplest and humblest form He could assume at His birth, and simplicity and humility were the laws of His Life. His bearing and manner were humble, though they could not conceal the dignity and majesty of God. His companions were of the humblest. Why then did He select the wise and the powerful among the Eastern Gentiles? He chose humility blended with power to convert His own chosen people: He chose faith, with Light superadded, to convert the Gentiles of the East. St. Matthew, when speaking of the revelation that was made to the "wise men," merely says that they saw His Star in the East, and they came to adore Him. St. Luke, when narrating the revelation to the shepherds, tells us that an angel of God stood by them, and the brightness of God shone around them. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." Here, then, is another significant fact—the revelation that was made to the Gentiles was made in all simplicity, the revelation that was made to the Jewish shepherds was made with all the splendor and power of Heaven. And mark the consequences. The shepherds "feared with a great fear." The "wise men" on the reappearance of the Star rejoiced with exceeding great joy. The "wise men" entering the house fell down and adored the Child, and offered their kingly gifts: there is not a word about the adoration of the shepherds.

The reason of all this seems to me to be found

in the pride and obstinacy of the Jewish people, and in the humility and faith, although that faith was blind, of the Eastern Gentiles. There seems to me to be a very remarkable contrast between the demeanor of the Jews towards our Divine Lord and the demeanor of other less-favored people. On the part of the Jews there is anger, hate, cunning, dissimulation, and all the other externals of mortified pride. On the part of the Gentiles there is reverence, respect and humility. Take the instance of the sinful Samaritan woman. When accused by our Divine Lord, she answered: "Sir, I perceive thou art a Prophet." When He spoke to the Scribes and Pharisees: "Let him among you that is without sin cast the first stone at her," they slunk away one by one, and He remained alone with the sinner. Again when He spoke of the fountain of living water to the Samaritan, she answered: "Lord, give me this water that I may not thirst;" when He spoke of the living Bread that came down from Heaven the Jews answered: "How can this man give us His flesh to eat." Witness, too, the beautiful humility of the woman of Canaan: "It is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs." But she said: "Yea, Lord: for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." "Oh! woman," said Jesus, "great is thy faith." To a people of which such as these are types there was no need of miracles to increase their faith, but there was need of light to show them in what they were to believe, and, therefore, where the Jews needed miracles to convince them, the Gentiles asked only an author-

ity to teach them. But as that authority was not to have the power of working miracles, it must have been an authority already recognized by the people.

Christ and his disciples preached and then confirmed their teachings by miracles. They who were to preach Christ to the Gentiles were not to have the power of working miracles, and their authority to teach the truth about what they had seen must have been already recognized by the people. And, therefore, they were selected, whose honor and whose truth are beyond question, and in whom their countrymen could have the fullest confidence.

It was well known that the time of the coming of the Messias was at hand: they had counted the weeks of days that Daniel had foretold: with the prophecy of Micheas in their hands they looked for the sign that the Redeemer had come: the star appeared, and the Spirit of God singled out from all that Eastern people wise men and kings—on whose truth the people might rely—for accuracy of information about the Infant Messias.

But they appear to us, too, under another aspect. We have seen why wise men were summoned to testify about the Messias. But Jesus, too, was a King: and the wise men were Kings. And He was King of the Jews. And He would be acknowledged as such. Babe in a manger: yea, but King in a manger, too: His humility was not to lessen His Majesty. As His faithful servant, Benedict XV, will call himself, and with no mock humility either, "Servant of the Servants of God, and at the same time will have the world

acknowledge him "Vicar of Jesus Christ," so the Divine Master in all the humility of Bethlehem would yet have himself acknowledged "King of the Jews." Now, who was to acknowledge Him King. The Scribes and High Priests? No: their pride was so hateful to Him that He would have the Gentiles preach Him to them. The shepherds? No: for they would not dare to tell Herod that his kingdom was at an end, nor dare to ask the proud Jewish priests to recognize in that little Babe of Bethlehem the Messias they had long expected. And, therefore, to have His Divinity and Royalty acknowledged, God had to select the Eastern Gentiles, to endow them with faith to see Him, and courage to profess their faith in Him.

They are a model to us: and theirs is a grace which we need—courage to profess our faith. To leave their own country to find Christ—to go into a hostile land among hostile strangers to find Christ—to be stared at and wondered at as if in quest of some unknown thing—to brave all the anger and hatred of the priests, whose pride was wounded because the revelation was not made to them—to tell Herod that his kingdom was at an end—to seek for the new-born King in an obscure village, and to suffer no diminution of faith when they saw the humility of Him they came to adore—surely this was the very perfection of faith. But is it a type of faith that is no longer possible? No! my dearly beloved. We can match it in our own days.

We can find even here among ourselves many and many who need not blush to see their faith compared with the faith of these wise men. Many

and many whose privations and hardships in seeking after their King exceed even the hardships of the kings in the long and painful journey they undertook, many who like the wise men broke family ties and set out at the call of faith to find their King, and passed through the unknown hostile cities of other religions, and braved the anger of those in power, and questioned their priests and got no answer, and yet followed the light of faith, as the wise men followed the star, until it stood over where the Child was, and they entered the lowly roof of the Catholic Church, and there they found the Child and its Mother. Nor are they scandalized at the humility of the Catholic Church, but still, with beautiful faith, they fall down and adore Him whom they have found, and offer Him the rich treasury of their hearts. All honor to them. Or, rather, may He who has given them their faith reward it in large measure, until in the sleep of death the angel comes to show them the way into their Heavenly Country.

Feast of the Holy Name

THE Church has set apart this, the second Sunday after Epiphany, as a day when the faithful might be called upon to honor in a special manner the Holy Name of Jesus.

This is the name that was given to our Divine Lord by the Angel before He was conceived, and that which was afterwards bestowed upon Him in a more formal manner on the day upon which He was circumcised. But as the circumcision was an event in itself, and as the Holy Name has a power in itself and an interest for us altogether independent of its association with the Circumcision, it was scarcely fitting to blend the two under one commemoration; and this is the reason that the Church of God has set apart this day for the special honor she wishes to have paid to the Name of Her Divine Spouse and our Divine Master.

And with peculiar gracefulness she has chosen as the Lesson for this day's feast the history as narrated in the acts of the Apostles of the brilliant defense and profession of his faith which St. Peter made when with St. John he was summoned before the Sanhedrim. It was the day succeeding that on which by the Holy Name of Jesus he had restored to health the lame man who sat at the gate of the temple that was called Beautiful; and turned away from himself the praises of the people, attributing the miracle to faith in the name of

Him whom they had killed, whom God had raised from the dead, and of whom they were witnesses.

And the priests, the Sadducees, had arrested them, being grieved that they taught the people, and on the following day Peter and John were summoned to confront the same tribunal which their Divine Master had confronted before in the days of His Passion. But time had changed the accusers and the accused. It was no longer Annas and Caiphas, haughty, self-confident, derisive, and defiant, but Annas and Caiphas, half-fearing to meet face to face His disciples, whom, as the events of the preceding day had shown, He had invested with His power and authority. And it was no longer Peter, driven by fear to the shadow of a pillar, and trembling when asked if he was a disciple of Jesus, and swearing that he knew Him not; but Peter strengthened by the Holy Ghost to be the fearless advocate of Christ, the fearless professor of Christ's enemies, the fearless exponent of the faith of the infant Church, and animated with the zeal which contrition only can give, to repair the momentary infidelity in Pilate's hall by the strongest and fullest declarations of lasting faith and fervor. Such was his spirit when, having been asked by his judges: "By what power, or by what name have you done this?" he answered that it was by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom "you have crucified, whom God raised from the dead; neither is there salvation under any other name, for there is no other name given to men whereby we must be saved."

Such is the name, so appropriate in itself, and

so dear to us, by which the Incarnate Son of God was made known to men.

The love and reverence of His Holy Ones and Prophets, who had foreseen His coming, had fashioned for Him names suited to their conceptions of His attributes and mission. "Behold," said Isaias, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel."[1] "For a child is born to us, and a Son is given to us," continues the same Evangelist-Prophet, "and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God the Mighty; the Father of the World to come, the Prince of Peace."[2]

These so glorious titles were not by any means irrelevant to the mission on which the Son of God was to come. Nay, their appropriateness was second only to that of the still more illustrious Name by which He was familiarly known. How could it be otherwise, when it was the Spirit of Truth that touched the lips of Isaias with hallowed fire, and the hearts of all with the still holier fire of His Love, and gave to each a language befitting the high Gospel He was commissioned to preach to men?

But He was awaiting the fullness of time to reveal that the Son of the Father's love was coming on a higher, holier, sublimer mission than was yet spoken of; that He was coming to recover that which was lost, to bring to life that which was dead, to raise a fallen world, to save a perishing people.

And it was only when the Son of God was leav-

[1] Is. vii—14. [2] Is. ix—6.

ing His Heavenly throne to dwell amongst men, that the Angel caught the name of His Sacred Mission from the lips of the Holy Ghost. And Gabriel came on his holy embassy, and he told the Word to Mary. "Thou shalt conceive and bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name, Jesus." And when the time was come, Mary, in all things obedient to the voice of God, took her Infant to the temple; and then, while the rude knife of circumcision was cutting His sacred flesh, and the first drops of His sacred blood fell upon the pavement, He was called by the High Priest, Jesus, Healer, Savior.

How well He acquitted Himself of His High Mission, how well every action of His life corresponded with the title He bore, how He hath redeemed His people from their iniquities, and made them unto God a Kingdom, we have learned from the words of His Evangelists. And, therefore it is that the Sacred Name has become so familiar and dear to us.

It summons up before us the Son of God, as He walked among men, His mild face beaming with pity, and His great heart glowing with love; we see Him restoring heaven's light to the blind, heaven's music to the deaf, and sweet human speech to the dumb. We see Him in hours, dark and sad and bitter to Him, but ah! how profitable to us! stretched in His bath of blood in Gethsemane, fainting against the pillar of Pilate, and looming out white and ghastly from the darkness of Calvary. And we know that all His sufferings and sorrows were borne for us! and therefore it is that His Sacred Name, with all its sad yet hal-

lowed reminiscences, has become so very dear to us.

It is the sweetest word that is given to human lips to utter; it is the solace of the living, and the hope of the dying; it is the one Word wherewith the holy soul, surcharged with tenderness and love, can give expression to its ecstatic emotions; and in It, the poor sinner finds in the depths of his despair and degradation and misery the highest hope and confidence and courage. It animates the weak, it strengthens the strong, it comforts the sorrowful, it multiplies sevenfold the joys of God's elect: it bids the sinner hope, the just rejoice.

The pious soul, glowing like the faces of the seraphs, after a morning spent in Communion, sacramental and spiritual, with its God, takes leave of Jesus, with his sweet Name upon her lips: and every moment of that happy day the memory of the Blessed Presence she enjoyed haunts her like a happy dream, and she sees Jesus everywhere, in the light of the firmament, in the flowers that bedeck the earth, in the stars that are sown broadcast in the Heavens.

On the other hand, when all other means have failed to win back to God's grace the hardened, impenitent sinner, when expostulations, and reasonings, and beseechings are in vain, and the poor soul is turning away with its burden of sin, to walk the ways of darkness again, the Priest of God recurs to the Sacred Name of Jesus, and with it and its sacred memories he conjures the poor, lost soul to quit its evil ways, and return to the Love and the Life that is offered it; and the appeal

is very seldom made in vain. Hell has no terrors to fright the sinner, heaven no joys to allure him; death is despised, and Judgment ignored; but with all his iniquities the sinner has a human heart, and his memory reverts at the mention of the Sacred Name to all the stories of the Life of Jesus; and he sees Him a trembling Babe, and the mild man going about doing good to all, and in the agony of Gethsemane, and on the cross on Calvary, and his heart is touched; and unknown to himself, unknown to all but God, he worships Jesus for His attributes, and he sympathizes with Jesus in His Sufferings; and God's hand is reached to him, and God's grace lifts him from the depths out of which he has cried: and then his conversion is completed, and there is joy in Heaven.

The sacred name of Jesus is the watchword of Christianity. Deeply as the saints and God's elect love It, as deeply do the world and the devils hate It, as they hated Him who bore It. "If the world hates you," said Our Lord to His disciples, "know you that it has hated me before you."

But the Church delights to honor the Name of her Sacred Spouse. It is written in our temples: It is borne aloft in our most solemn processions under the crucified figure of Him who bore it: It is wafted with the swell of the organ around the aisles of our cathedrals, whilst every head is bent, and every tongue is mute: It is the name under which is enrolled many a noble brigade in the great army of Christ: many an artist hand, guided by a loving heart, has adorned It with all the embellishments experience could suggest or genius

devise; and the art of the highest sculptor as of the poorest artisan is called into requisition to engrave on the marble mausoleum or on the rude stone cross that Name in which are concentrated all the strong faith, and the abiding hope, and the deep, unutterable love of the departed Christian.

That this most blessed Name should be respected and venerated by us, that it should be spoken by us with affection, and heard by us in reverence, is a conviction that helps in the mind of every Catholic, and finds a faithful exponent in their every word and action.

The doctors of the Jewish covenant, when transcribing the histories of their ancestors, or the wisdom of their sages, or the visions of their prophets, laid down their pens, and covered their faces in awe, when the word "Jehovah" appeared, so salutary was the terror with which that great name, heard amid the thunders of Sinai and seen in the pillar of flame, had invested itself.

Believe me, the Name of Jesus, now so sweet and familiar to us, is no less terrible. "At the name of Jesus," says the Holy Scripture, "every knee shall bend of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and in Hell," so that, when the Sacred Name is uttered, by the lips of a saint in his ecstasy, or of a scoffer in his frenzy, the Seven Spirits that stand before the throne of the Eternal, the Angels, the Archangels, the Principalities and Powers, the Thrones and Dominations, the Cherubim and Seraphim—all the host of Heaven, like a great wave of light, rocks and sways in deepest adoration, confessing the majesty of the Redeemer of men.

At the same time, their fallen brethren are forced by Divine omnipotence to worship the mystery of God, incarnate [1] in human flesh—that mystery which conferred so high an honor on man's nature that Lucifer and his host refused to comprehend it, and so rebelled and were lost. Yet this great and awful Name, which the lips of saints are not worthy to pronounce, is familiar and homely to us. Nay, Jesus Himself wishes that it should be ever on our lips, and ever written on our hearts: and the Holy Church, which has inherited all His love for men, has enriched it with many most precious indulgences, thus appealing to our very selfishness to worship the Sacred Name, if, perchance, at any time our reverence for it should abate, or our love for it grow cold.

In all circumstances, in all times, in all places, this Blessed Name will be our greatest consolation and support. But there are two occasions, important beyond all others, when it will be our surest and easiest defense—the hour of temptation and the hour of death. The hour of temptation: for, apart altogether from the reflections it suggests to the mind of every Christian, and the consequent influence it exerts in determining his actions, it has a force, a power, an innate strength, which is omnipotent to repel temptation.

United with the name of the mother whom He loved (and who will dare to separate Jesus from Mary), let this blessed Name be the companion of your loneliness, the soother of your sorrow, your hope in sin, your joy in grace, your shield in temptation, your song in victory. In your death-hour,

[1] Revealed.

He whom you invoked so frequently during life will not be absent from your pillow. And the Church, ever jealous of the welfare of her little ones, lest they should be deprived of the least of God's graces, grants a Plenary Indulgence to the dying Catholic, who, being unable to obtain the ministrations of a Priest, pronounces the Sacred Name with contrition and love. The same grace is extended to him if he should be speechless, provided that he thinks of Jesus with sorrow and affection, that thus he may pass through the portal of Death, spotless, unstained, and wing his flight to Heaven, untouched by the penal fires of Purgatory.

On the Sacred Heart of Jesus

We celebrate to-day, my Brethren, the latest development of that love for Her Divine Spouse which is the richest inheritance of the Catholic Church.

We know, for Catholic Theology teaches it as certain, that we owe to the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity equal gratitude, equal love, for the priceless blessings of Redemption: but for the proximate agent of that redemption, for Him who was our flesh, and suffered in it, and took it up to Heaven, and invested it there by its perpetual hypostatic union with power and majesty equal to that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, we have a feeling which we can scarcely define.

It is not the awful reverence and filial love with which we regard the Father, nor the vague, half-fearing, half-wondering respect which we feel for the Holy Spirit, but it is a consciousness that between us and our Incarnate God there is knit for evermore an eternal bond of brotherhood; that He is our possession; that by assuming our nature he has exiled Himself from Heaven; that He is no longer exclusively a God of hosts and armies, but the hidden God, the God of Israel, the Savior.

And with this Divine Mystery of the Incarnation and the sacramental presence of her Divine Spouse in the cognate mystery of the Eucharist ever before her eyes, the Church of Christ has made the Person of our Divine Redeemer the spe-

cial and constant object of the adoration of her faithful.

She never tires of putting before us the Sacred Humanity, that holds the Divinity and all its attributes as it were in annihilation; she puts it before us, as the trembling Babe, as the Divine Man, going about doing good to all, in all the ghastly horrors of His Passion, and in all the new-born glories of His resurrection. She shows us, and the sight has grown familiar, those Divine Hands that were for ever lifted up in prayer to the Eternal Father, or dispensing blessings to men: we know the blessed feet, that walked the sands of Judea and the waters of Galilee, that were washed by the tears of Magdalen and wiped with her hair: she will have us put our hands, like Thomas, into the wounds of His hands and feet and side, but not like Thomas, with incredulity, but with the faith that He Himself will give us, a faith that will merit for us the beatitude: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

And she has brought us to-day around her altars to tell us again of that mysterious Love which God entertains for men, and to expose for our worship and adoration the fountain of that love, the depth of which the Father and the Spirit alone can fathom—the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And she bids us to sit at her feet, and under the guidance of the Divine Spirit she will teach us, with that theological precision which is her peculiar characteristic, the nature and the limits of that devotion which she will have implanted in the hearts of her faithful.

And first of all she tells us that the object of our

reverent worship is no visionary symbol, or shadowy figure, but the real, living, pulsing Heart of our Divine Lord, the living chalice of the Precious Blood, the same Sacred Heart that from the first instant of its existence sent up its piteous pleadings to the Father for mercy upon men—the same Sacred Heart that was ever full to bursting of sympathy with human sorrow—the same Sacred Heart that dictated the gentle words and the kind deeds of our Beloved Lord—the same Sacred Heart that was crushed in Gethsemane under a weight of sorrow, to which not all the sorrow of all the reprobate for eternity is comparable—the same Sacred Heart that never hardened under all the contumely and the insult and the outrage; the same Sacred Heart that was desecrated even in death and that made even that desecration an expiation for sin—the same Sacred Heart that beats in the breast of the glorified Humanity of Jesus, at the right hand of His Father—the same Sacred Heart that throbs under the fingers of the Priest at the Consecration in the great Eucharistic Sacrifice.

And she tells us that she has taken the Sacred Heart of Jesus, united with His Humanity and Divinity, as the special object of our worship today, for she is mindful that among the many other words of our Divine Lord upon earth, was one that was to remind her children to all time that they had a model of highest virtues to imitate—a model of that meekness which Isaias had foretold —a model of that humility which Isaias did not foretell, for Isaias could not have comprehended

it—the meekness and humility of the Sacred Heart: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." And she has learned that in all ages, and in all climes, the heart has been regarded as the center and source of all great affections, and she wishes to commemorate in a special manner the love of Him "who having loved His own who were in the world loved them to the end."

And she looks around the great festivals of the year, and she remembers that at the Nativity she is so overpowered by the humiliations of our Divine Lord that she does not think of His Love, and during Holy Week the shadows of Calvary are around her, and awe-stricken at the horrible impiety of men she does not think of the Love of their Victim; and on Easter Sunday she exults in His glory, and in her great joy she forgets the past, with its tale of Love; and on Ascension Day she looks up to Heaven, and is happy to think and think only of the joy of our Divine Lord on meeting His Heavenly Father, and even on Corpus Christi triumph and exultation are the feelings of the hour.

But to-day, even while the memory of that great feast still lingers with us, the Church has called us together to commemorate the love of God for us. That was the Feast of our love for Jesus: this is the Feast of His love for us. Still we must not confound the object of this devotion with the motive. It is the love of our Divine Lord that we commemorate; but it is the Heart of our Divine Lord that we worship: the Heart, that symbolizes the love. Again, though not confounding, neither

must we separate the object and motive of this devotion, but both combine and form the material and formal object of our adoration.

Lastly, the Church teaches us that the worship she asks us to pay to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the same worship that we pay to the person of Jesus—the same worship that we pay to the Father and the Holy Ghost—that though our devotion is specially directed to the Sacred Heart, we by no means exclude the rest of the Sacred Humanity!

This arises from what is called the Hypostatic Union—the union of the two natures of Jesus Christ, the divine and human in one person. That person is the Person of the Word made Flesh: it is therefore Divine. Hence, Mary is the Mother of God for she is the Mother of that Divine Person. Hence the hands and feet of our Blessed Lord are Divine. They are the hands and feet of God. Hence is His Sacred Heart Divine.

Hence does it merit Divine honor. Divine in its Hypostatic Union. Divine in its hatred of sin—Divine in the reparation it has paid, and still pays, to the Father—Divine in its sorrows and sufferings—Divine most of all in its love and mercy for men. In its love for the holy and the just—in its greater love for the unjust and the sinner.

Who shall measure it or sound its depths? It is like looking up into the blue sky. Infinite azure everywhere, but the mind that attempts to measure its height is sure to lose itself. So it is with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Love, benevolence, charity, kindness everywhere; but "the breadth and

the length and the height and the depth," neither St. Thomas, with his giant intellect, nor the seraphic intelligence of the highest angel, nor the all but infinite mind of Mary, can measure.

Let us take a proof in the case of sinners. Let us start with this premise, that there is one thing, and only one, that can measure itself with God, one thing, and only one, that requires the infinity of God to hate it as it deserves, and that is sin. Now open the page of Holy Writ:

"Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee."

"Master, say it!"

"Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house; thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she with tears hath washed my feet and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she since she came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she with ointment hath anointed my feet. Wherefore, I say to thee, many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much." And he said to her: "Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath made thee safe: go in peace."—Luke, vii. 44–50.

Think of the infinite hatred of God for sin. Think, then, who was this woman? and then admit that if ever the mercy of God was taxed it was here, and here it was not found wanting.

Take again the sequel of this scene—the tableau on Calvary, the strangest sight God's angels ever witnessed. Jesus the virgin, Mary the virgin, John the virgin, and Magdalen, the Sinner by excellence. There in the midst of the only real nobility the earth ever saw, a nobility lent by

Heaven for a time to Earth to bless it with its presence, and to hallow it with its memory, there in the center of the dignitaries of Heaven, was the outcast, she that had been the caterer for Hell, she, whose work in time was bearing fearful fruit in eternity in the hot tears of the damned she had sent there. And was there mercy for her? Were there no cries of vengeance from the poor lost souls to echo around the Cross of Christ, and steel the heart of Jesus against compassion and shut up the fountain of mercy? Perhaps so. But the dying eyes saw only the tears of the sinner: the dying God heard only the sighs that were going up to Him from a heart that was crushed by the omnipotence of His Love, and the intensity of its sorrow. And when about to yield up His pure soul into the hands of His Father, He looked on Magdalen, the first fruits of His great atonement, and told His Father that His work on earth was consummated. And when the soldier came around His Cross, and opened His Sacred Heart with his spear, not a tint, not a pin's-point, of Blood fell upon the spotless Mary, or the virginal John, but it descended in a healing flood on the head of the weeping sinner, and in the baptism of the Blood of Jesus, and in the baptism of her own tears, the soul of the sinner was doubly regenerated.

More than virgin in her penitent love, more than martyr in her passionate woe, I do believe that she is as near the Sacred Heart in Heaven to-day as she was when she knelt at the foot of the cross on Calvary, and if I have spoken hard things of her, she knows that I have done so with no irreverence, but only to preach the grandeur of her contrition,

and the infinite love of the Sacred Heart that accepted it.

But what do I say? The strangest sight God's angels ever witnessed! If there were not another in these our own days to keep them for ever astare with astonishment! They, who remember the day, the memory of which shall never die in heaven, when their bright brother angels admitted the momentary sin, and the swift retributive justice of God caught them up, and bound them in the dismal depths of Hell for ever—how can they, with that fearful lesson written in characters of fire before them, look out upon this world, and see the darkness and the death-shadow over it, and the sins of men beneath, and reconcile the justice of God towards angels, and His infinite mercy to men?

They do not know, perhaps, that in that darkness and death-shadow the Eternal Father discerns here and there the Little Lamp that denotes the Sacramental Presence of His Son; that in the darkness and death-shadow He sees the hands of His Divine Son uplifted to ward off His Justice; that out of the darkness and the death-shadow He hears the throbbings of the Sacred Heart, throbbings that would ransom a million of worlds: and He thinks of Calvary and is patient yet a little while.

For ever thinking of men—men never think of Him. When the morning sun shines upon the earth, when the red glare of noon falls upon the world outside, when the shadows of evening fall and the twilight deepens into night and the stars come out in the heavens, and there is sleep upon

the world, thinking, in the solitude of His prison on the altar of you and me, when you and I are not thinking of Him. Thinking of the holy souls, that clustered around Him at the morning Mass, thinking of every fervent Communion, of every devout meditation, of every warm aspiration, of every act of reparation and love, and thinking of the surprise and joy of those holy souls when they come to Heaven and find that though no word was spoken to them from the silent tabernacle, no response given to their prayers, that no word or thought of theirs has faded from the memory of Jesus, but that He has treasured them up in His Sacred Heart, with the more than commensurate reward He has attached to each.

Thinking, too, of the tepid soul, that once perhaps loved him dearly, but has since gone hunting butterfly vanities through the world. Thinking with pain of how that poor soul came in, and bent the knee, and muttered a prayer, and went hunting butterfly vanities again. Thinking most of all of the weary, way-worn sinner, with the lightnings of the Father's anger flickering around his head, and the "welcome" already on the lips of the devils beneath! Thinking by what sweet allurements of His grace He will wean away that poor soul from sin and sorrow, and bring him, as He brought Magdalen, a weeping penitent to His feet. Thinking, too of the other sheep, who are not of this fold, and how He will bring them too into His fold. And there shall be but one sheepfold and Himself the Shepherd. Thinking for ever of men: men never thinking of Him! How the angels of Heaven pity us!!!

My Beloved, a duty devolves upon us to-day, and for us lives the duty of Reparation to the Sacred Heart! Reparation for our own sins; reparation for the sins of the world; for the scoffings, the revilings, the iniquities, of a world that would crucify God to-day, as it crucified Him of old. Reparation, most of all for the deadly, black, and blighting sin that tore this fair land [1] from the sweet yoke of Christ, and gave it up to its three centuries of iniquity. To take away from the face of Boniface, our patron, who, for the love of the Sacred Heart, that we worship to-day, went out from his country and from his father's house into a distant land, and there sealed his faith with his blood; to take from his face the blush, and the shame and the sorrow when he looks over this fair land, once trodden by the feet of saints, now given up to its temples of fruitless prayer, and the devil-worship of its streets.

Great and good men speak hopefully of a second spring, a new Resurrection. Indeed, God does seem to be drawing aside slowly his curse from the land, in the fact that England has taken almost the lead of the world in propagating this Devotion to the Sacred Heart, we discern no transitory gleam of hope, but the splendid promise of a large, all-atoning future. Perhaps the day will come when we shall lend our saints to other lands, as we lent Boniface of old. However that may be, for the wishes of those great and good men, we pray a happy consummation! And may our prayers, however feeble, be not unheard in Heaven!!!

[1] England.

Passion Sermon—Good Friday

Why then is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread the Winepress?

I have trodden the Winepress alone; and of the gentiles there was not a man with me. Isaias 63. 2.

ONCE more the course of time has brought around this holiest Season of the year; and once again have you assembled to hear the tale of Man's infinite perversity and God's infinite mercy. It ought not be a pleasant tale for us to meditate upon. It reveals too truly man's great folly and blindness and wickedness. It is the history of his greatest crime—the darkest and most terrible deed ever accomplished. Yet we do not turn aside from it, nor avoid its contemplation. We do not shut it from our eyes in horror; or try to cloak it up carefully so that it shall trouble us no more. Nay, we seek it out, try to keep it ever before our minds, study it, meditate upon it, and read with pious care every revelation made to the Saints, every detail of Christ's passion and death, as narrated in the Sacred Gospels, or has come down to us from the vision of the Saints.

The gibbet on which Christ hung has become our sign and promise of redemption and mercy. Once a shameful and hideous thing, which the eye of man never beheld but in horror, it is now become the symbol of our highest hopes, the blessed mark to which our eyes ever turn with confidence and

love. We mark ourselves with it morning and noon and night. We lift it on the highest pinnacles of our Churches. It is the first sign made over the infant; it is the last sign presented to the eyes of the dying. Nay, even after death, when the clay has closed down for ever on the remains of the departed Christian, his friends lift over those dead remains the figure of the gibbet on which Christ died, to prove that the Cross conquers death and is a promise of a glorious immortality.

Why is that shameful sign our conquering symbol; why is that dark and terrible tragedy of Calvary, with all its horrors, such a favorite study for us? Why do you come here to listen to it again? Is cruelty, and pride, blows and scourgings, the plaiting of thorns for torture, and the waving of whips that cut and draw blood, and the driving of nails through shrinking flesh, and the fever of thirst, and the tearing of the heart with a lance—are these such pleasant subjects that women and even children are come here to-night to hear of them for the hundredth time? Or is there something in this mournful tale, which has a special interest for us? Something that makes this terrible tragedy our own? There is, for in that tragedy, you and I were actors, and you and I have profited by it to this extent, that through these awful sufferings endured by Christ, we have escaped being actors in another tragedy, the scene of which is placed in the nether darkness; the instruments are the terrible fire created by the breath of an angry God, the agents of which are devils and the worm that dies not, the scenery of

which is that smoke that ascends from the everlasting furnace and the end of which is—never. And as the passion and death of Christ are dear to us, and terrible as they are, we turn to them for comfort and strength.

If a friend dies far away from us, and we could not hear his last words, nor close his dying eyes, but we have heard that he spoke of us to the end, and left us all he had, and saved us from terrible ruin, we should be very hard if we would not like to hear of these last moments. Now, that friend is Christ—and of His last moments I speak: All that I have said, has been done for each of us.

I do not propose this evening to go through all the stages of the passion of Our Blessed Lord. I am going simply to take, as it were, three pictures from that passion, and show them to you, and tell you what they signify.

It is right in a great city in the East, famous for its history and its splendors. Sleep has come down upon the eyes of men, except on a small group of the wicked, who, with a white-faced traitor in the midst, are plotting evil against the innocent. Outside the city there runs a brook, called Kedron, and beyond the brook, on the sloping declivity of a hill, there is a wood of small, stunted, bushy trees. The figures of four men cross this brook, and without a word sink into the midnight darkness of the plantation. Not a word do they speak, and when their footsteps have died off the fallen leaves there is deeper silence than before. An hour goes by; and now we hear the low, painful sobbing of some one in agony—the

sad moaning of a human voice, uttering its sorrow and pain. It is the voice of a man; and it comes not from physical suffering; for men do not cry out with bodily pain. It is the voice of a man; and there is terrible agony in His heart, if we are to judge by the broken sounds that reach us. Suddenly there is a cry which makes the birds jump from the trees, and makes the waters of the brook curdle with horror; and echoing over hill and valley in a scream of awful agony we hear the words from the darkness of the garden, "Father, if possible let this Chalice pass from me"!

We enter the garden, and behold there is but One there. In a corner, kneeling down on the wet grass and leaves, with His body thrown forward, and His hair falling down around Him, and His head bent down upon the ground, is a man. He is in agony. From Him that cry has come. We see His whole frame trembling with pain. He lifts His face towards us; and what a face! White as the whitest marble, cold as the face of the dead, but there are red streaks across the forehead and beneath the eyes, and those eyes look at us with a sorrow and pain such as man never experienced before. We come near and touch Him. His garments are cold and wet; in the light of the stars we see and our hands are blood. We stoop and gather the grass and leaves that were beneath Him. They, too, are wet. We again bring our hands to the light of the stars, and behold our hands are covered with blood. What terrible work is this? Who is this man, whose cry of agony we have heard, and whose blood has

watered the soil of this garden? Why, therefore, is thy apparel red, and thy vesture as of those who tread the winepress? And the answer comes again in the words of Scripture: "The winepress I have trodden alone, and of the gentiles there is not a man with Me."

No, Lord! Alone in Thine agony in the garden —alone, with Thy angry Father—alone with the awful burden of man's iniquities pressing Thee to the earth—not one of Thy angels near Thee, till Thy struggles are nearly over; not one of Thy disciples to comfort Thee—unmindful of Thee, they are sunk in sleep.

But what is the meaning of Thine agony? What terrible vision has come to Thee that threw Thee groveling on the earth, and forced Thy blood through the pores of Thy flesh, and made Thy lips utter that prayer to Him, Thy Father, who hath loved Thee with an everlasting love? Ah! terrible indeed was Thy vision: Man and his iniquities!

From Adam and his wife, living in their shame, as they pass the portals of Paradise, down to the last man who shall stand on this earth, till the fire of God consume him, the human race has passed before the eyes of Christ. He stands on the bridge that spans the two eternities and that sad procession wends along before His eyes. With laughter in their eyes and on their lips, behold the long array of this world's children. Nation after nation, race after race, the old and the young, the rich in his purple, the beggar in his rags, the lusty and strong with their heads lifted to Heaven in their pride, the beggar and the cripple with their eyes bent to earth in their sorrow—and the name

of Christ is on many lips—but hardly a face in that mighty multitude is turned towards Him but with scorn.

Far worse: from the hearts and lips and hands of those multitudes sins come forth as numerous as the sands of the sea, as the flies that float in the air in summer. Sins, deadly in their malice, hideous in their nature. Sins that make the heart of Christ sick with sorrow. Sins too loathsome to be spoken of, sins too terrible to be named. Committed in the glare of noonday, under the eyes of God—committed in the darkness of night, through which it was hoped the eye of God could not pierce. Committed in the tranquil fields, and making Nature shudder. Committed in the noisy cities, whose fetid atmosphere is choked with sin, and daily sends up its hateful exhalations before the throne of His Father. Sins of the old who ought to have passed the season of sin, and sins of the young and tender for whom the heart of Christ is pierced with a special anguish!

But this is not the worst. Christ saw those sins from Heaven before; but there was no dire agony, no sweat of blood. Ah! but now He stands in flesh and blood in the world's thoroughfare, and, horror of horrors to His gentle soul, there is not a sin committed by that vast multitude that now does not detach itself and cling to Him. As some hideous reptiles, creeping from their covering, would enfold themselves around the limbs of a sleeping man, and stifle him with their foul stenches, and drive their poisoned fangs into his flesh, and coil round and round with their strong folds and

squeeze him to death, so the sins of men coiled around the heart of Christ, and stifled Him.

And not a friend near! Judas plotting his treason. Peter, James and John asleep, and, looking up towards Heaven, Jesus beheld in the rift a thundercloud, the face of His Father in anger, the love of His Eternal Father quenched, the Holy Spirit standing by in his sorrow, until His great, loving Heart could no longer bear it, and He flung Himself down on His face on the ground and the agonizing cry came from His lips: Father, let this Chalice pass from Me.

Now it is no longer night, but the glare of the noontide sun falls hot and fierce on the streets of the city. In a large open space there is a palace, very white and beautiful, with pillars and porticoes, and broad, marble steps sloping down to the street. A standard floats overhead, for it is the palace of the Roman Governor. A vast mass of people surges and sways in that street, and their eyes are turned upwards to the doors and windows, whilst, mute and silent as statues, the soldiers of the guard stare down upon them.

It is a strange multitude. The men, with the dark, Jewish type of feature, with arms folded and determined faces, are still. The dusky Jewish women are in a high state of excitement, and jests and jeers and laughter pass freely amongst them. Here and there amongst the multitude, distinguishable by their white garments and the strange letters on their breasts, are the priests of the synagogues, their eager faces lighted up by excitement, as they move hither and thither and whisper a

word here and a word there, and argue and reason, and make the men's faces darker and the women's laughter more loud. And here, alas, are little children, whose tiny voices are hardly heard; and it is well, for they are saying things that make their angels weep.

Suddenly, a deep hush falls upon the mighty multitude, and every face is turned upwards to the balcony of Pilate's palace. For Pilate is there —pale and trembling, fearful of that crowd—fearful still more of One, whom he has just condemned to be scourged. A deeper hush falls upon the crowd, and forth from a door in the marble wall two soldiers come, and between them is a white figure, who faints and stumbles, then stands erect, and looks down with eyes of meekness and sorrow on those who are thirsting for His life. And now there arises a shout from that angry mob that makes Pilate grow paler, and startles the Roman soldiers themselves. A long, fierce hiss of anger, then a scream of execration that rises up into a torrent of awful blasphemies. The faces of the men are distorted with passion as they cry and curse; the arms of women bare to the shoulders are stretched out with clenched fists, whilst their lips pour forth a stream of fierce imprecations against that white, silent figure in the balcony; ah! and the little children lift their tiny trebles and imitate the fiendish conduct of their fathers and mothers, whilst the priests, now that the moment of their vengeance has come, stimulate and excite the already fierce passions of the mob, until nothing seems able to restrain or oppose. Then Pilate

rises up and with shaking hand points to his meek prisoner, and half in derision, half in sorrow, exclaims: "Behold the Man."

We will accept his invitation and look closer. Ah! it is just the same face we saw a little while ago in the garden of Gethsemane—just the same face stained with blood—but then the blood came from excess of agony—now it comes from the hands of men; for see around His white forehead, and circling His brown hair, that is now matted and thick, there is a rough wreath of prickly brambles, and the thorns have gone in through the temples, and at every movement of the head a tiny stream of blood trickles down His cheeks or blinds His eyes. And His face is bruised and livid, for the hands have fallen heavily upon them. And a reed is resting upon His shoulders, supported by a rope that holds his wrists together. But they have changed His own red garment for the white vesture of a fool; and we can imagine how they have mocked Him and spat upon Him, for last night and the night before, He never lay down His head in rest, but sat in the hall of Pilate, and the soldiers made merry over Him and used Him as an imbecile with rough jests and cruel blows.

But is not this the very man whom all Israel for the three years was going wild about? Is not this the man who was called by the people their Messias, their King, their Prophet? A few days ago did we not see this same people flinging their garments before Him in the street, and swinging palms in their hands and shouting Hosannas in His praise? And was not all this glory only what He deserved for the mighty work of mercy and

goodness He wrought amongst them, spending Himself in their service, and never bestowing a thought upon Himself? From that day when He came down to the Jordan, and St. John in the midst of his exhortation to the people stopped suddenly, as if he had seen the majesty of the Godhead itself, and cried out: "Behold the Lamb of God"; down to yesterday when he touched the servant of the High Priest and healed him, have we not been hearing of the wonders of His mercy and the greatness of His power? Was not this He from whose lips ever flowed words of compassionate tenderness, and from whose hands streams of mercy into body and soul? Was not this He who laid down His weary body to rest on the stones by the highway when fatigued by His labors amongst men?

Why have they scourged that sacred body? Did we not often see that gentle face, beaming with sweetness and mildness when the poor came around Him, and the sick were laid at His feet to be healed. Why have they pierced that head with thorns, and bruised that face with blows? Did we not often listen to Him in wonder and amazement, as sacred words flowed from His lips, and lessons of the highest wisdom sank deep into our hearts? Why have they clothed Him now in the garments of a fool, and mocked Him as one bereft of reason? And those hands now tied so firmly, with the ropes cutting the flesh—are not those the hands that were laid on the little children, when mothers brought their babes to be blessed—are not these the hands that touched the eyes of the blind and they saw and the ears of the deaf and they heard—

that held the hand of the young man, who lay upon his bier cold and still till, wakened by this voice, he woke from the dream of death and was restored to his mother—the same that were lifted before the tomb of Lazarus and he came forth—the same that held the daughter of the High Priest, and raised her from the couch where she lay dead—the same that were lifted over the head of Magdalen when the shackles of sin fell from her for ever? And why have they tied Him as a felon and criminal, and paraded Him before Heaven and earth as a fool? But further still, is not this He who stood with Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration, and His face shone like the sun and His garments were white as snow and the voice of the Eternal Father was heard from the clouds: "This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased!"

Stop! soldiers! Stop! Pilate! Stop! priests and people! There is some terrible mistake here! This is not a criminal! This is no felon! This is no fool! I see the Heavens opened, and the angels of God bending down from their thrones, and on their faces is wrath and fury and in their hands are sharp swords; and only that some invisible power is staying them, they would descend in an avalanche of fire and sweep the whole of you —Pilate and priests and people—into hell. Yes! *Ecce Homo!* Behold the man! has reached Heaven, and God's battalions are looking out over the bastions of Paradise, and that meek prisoner whom you hold is their Master and their God. Yes, "*Ecce Homo*" has gone down into hell, and the devils are leaping and laughing in their mirth;

and all evil things are wild with joy, because the Holy One is in the hands of His enemies, and the hearts of men are bent on His destruction.

Stop! Pilate, for a moment! Last night in her dreams your wife was troubled—strange visions came before her in which this pale prisoner had a part, and she told you this morning: "Have nothing to do with this just man"—stop for a moment—one fatal sentence, and you wash your hands for the ages of eternity, and pass through your fingers all the waters of the ocean, but the blood will cling to you to the end. Stop! Priests. For many a long year have kings and prophets desired to see what you now see, and were not able. In the silence of their hearts, and in the loneliness of mountains, clothed with skins and fed by ravens, persecuted by men even unto death—the holy prophets of your race, whose words you treasure, and whose memories you love, strained their eyes through the mists of centuries to catch one glimpse of the promised Deliverer! And behold the man! Behold, He is before you! Unroll the long scrolls of your histories, and search your historical books and the dreams of your prophets, examine again the mysteries concealed therein, and the strange puzzles of your texts—then lift your eyes from the holy page and behold Him to whom every text is pointing—Behold the Man! Renew your morning and evening oblations from your victim at the altar, and let your incense go up before God morning and night. You know it is all a figure and symbol of Whom—Behold the Man! Open your eyes, ye priests, shake off the felon of pride—and acknowledge your God and Messias in this man.

And you, ye people! If the memory of mighty miracles, which God alone could work—if the memory of words of wisdom, which God alone could speak—if the memory of the day when you sought to make him King, as some more stupendous manifestation of His Divine Power broke upon your eyes—if these things will not come back to you now—at least remember the infinite kindness, the boundless mercy, the unspeakable charity of this man before you. Speak for Him, some one who has experienced His mercy. Speak for Him, ye blind, who now behold Him—speak for Him, ye palsied, whose limbs have been strengthened by Him—speak for Him, ye dead, who were summoned back to life by His voice. In vain! In vain! Miracles and power, infinite goodness and unspeakable love, memories of benefits received, of favors granted—every good and generous thought is sacrificed and flung to the winds—and in an awful chorus of blasphemy and ingratitude that maddened multitude first invoke a fearful curse upon themselves: "His Blood be upon us and on our children." And then a sentence on their Maker: "Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and the demons are wild with delight, and the angels close their wings and hide their burning faces.

And promptly, without delay, as if they feared they should repent, that mad multitude rises up, and hastens to the third and last scene of this awful tragedy. They had hurried Him up the mountain, and when He fainted and fell, they drove him quicker with brutal blows. Sweat poured from His face and blood from His wounds,

but they heeded not, and some holy women, with eyes blind from weeping, stooped over Him, and wiped His forehead, and told Him how they pitied Him. But the mob swept Him onwards and upwards, and now He stands on the bare hillside of Calvary, and looks around on the city, the Temple, and the people, before he ascends the gibbet on which He is to die. Then at a sign from His executioners He lays Himself gently on the Cross; and then with awful agony, and shrinking of the flesh, He is fastened to it, lifted on high, and looks out once more from His Throne of suffering on the world for which He is going to die.

The soldiers have stolen His garments, and are rattling the dice to see who shall win them; the priests are gathered together in a group, and look, still with terror, on Him, whom they have slain; the people are scattered here and there waiting and watching their victim till they hear He is dead.

Close by the Cross is Magdalen, and the other Mary and John, and closer still is she who is dearer to Him than all the world beside—His own great Mother. They are all silent—their grief is too terrible for tears; for they know how their Master is suffering. Magdalen presses her forehead against His feet—they are hot and burning with fever, and there is fever in His brain and in His hands, and hot fever in the wild pulsations of His Sacred Heart. The Mother is afraid to look up into the face of her Son. She has heard Him speak, and commit her to the care of St. John, and her heart is broken with anguish. For now all the many years of their love came before her.

She remembered the look that was in His eyes

when they opened upon her in the stable on that night when the angels sang and the shepherds came and adored. She remembered how He nestled close to her in their flight under the stars while the screams of murdered children and the wailing of women struck her ears. She remembered how she watched Him as He grew up a graceful and gentle boy; and how proud she was when the eyes of other mothers followed Him and they whispered to each other that He was Mary's child. She remembered the long, quiet, sunny days at Nazareth when He worked by the side of Joseph and made His preparation in solitude for His mighty mission—and when at last He went forth from His humble home, and gradually at first, and then every day, reports came to the Mother of the marvelous doings of her child, and how the blessings of the poor followed Him, and women cried: "Blessed was the mother that bore Him"—and now it has all come to this—and here He is, torn and bleeding and agonized—and she, His own Mother, cannot help Him. She can only lean her head against the hard wood of the Cross and silently weep. The hours wear on. Suddenly, soldiers and priests and people are startled by a wild, mournful cry from the lips of Jesus—a cry such as one heard two nights ago from the Garden of Gethsemane—a cry of pity and terror—a cry of desolation and anguish. Lifting His head from His breast, and fixing His dying eyes upon Heaven, where the black night is already gathering, Jesus cries: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What terrible words are these—God forsaken by God! The Son forsaken

by the Father! The passion of men—the anger of demons raged against Him—the sins of the world clothing Him from head to heel—the angels kept back lest they should fly to His succor, and the Father abandoning Him in His agony and in the death that is now approaching! And like the sad cry heard by some abandoned creature on the streets of a strange city by night—like the piteous appeal of a contrite child to the father who is determined to punish him—like the trembling supplication of a creature who is brought face to face with an appalling death—came that cry from the lips of Jesus: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" All the majesty and serene dignity of the Godhead are now laid aside. All the quiet majesty with which He bore His scourging and faced the angry mob and answered His accusers, has left Him. All the grace with which even up to the last moment He spoke, bidding the women not to weep—telling the contrite thief he would be with Him that day in Paradise—are gone, and instead of a soul suffering in silent majesty an awful death, we behold the terrible spectacle of a God dying in horror and pain—crying for pity—complaining of His dereliction—questioning His Father for a reason why all this horror should seize Him—why He alone should be forsaken. Around the bedsides of the worst of men there is at least some semblance of God's pity—but Jesus is dying without one glance of compassion from Heaven—"My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Struck with horror, with hearts more deeply agonized than before, the women are silent.

There is here some dread mystery of the Godhead which they cannot pierce—some secret terror in the heart of Christ which they cannot fathom. A few moments of silence. Then a low murmur from His lips—"It is finished"—and looking up they behold His head fallen on His breast. It is all over now. Jesus is dead. The pain and the anguish are no more. Silent are the lips that dripped mercy—still is the great heart that beat with compassion for humanity. The malice of men has done its worst and God has died by their hands. And behold! Nature is shuddering at the crime. The sun that was shining brilliantly in the heavens has drawn in his light and a darkness as deep as that which fell on Egypt gathers around Calvary and Jerusalem. The earth is trembling and fearing in agony, and strange voices are heard in the air. Terror-stricken with the consciousness of their crime, this mad people run wildly down the mountain, and through the gates of the city and into the streets. People come out to the doors of their houses with pale and anxious faces, asking what has happened, and before their eyes walking through the streets are the sheeted ghosts of men and women long dead—for the graves have been flung open by some power—and wrapping their winding-sheets around them, the skeleton forms of the departed have risen up to carry terror into the homes from which long since they were borne. In the forests the beasts creep to shelter or cluster together for protection, and deeper and deeper grows the darkness, and every moment more distinct grow the forms of the specters that are crowding the streets, and conscience-

stricken men, who a moment ago were shouting in derision on the mountain, now murmur with white lips, "this was a just man!" and Pilate in his palace is trembling with dread, though the brave Roman guards are around him: and last of all some one who has gone into the Temple to pray has announced that the veil which hung before the holy of holies, and which no one dare lift but the High Priest, is rent from top to bottom, and the place where the Most High used to dwell, where the Ark of the Law was kept, and the white cloud rested by day, and the fiery pillar by night, was thrown open to the gaze of the multitude, for the glory of the Most High had departed, and the curse was already beginning to fall on the people.

All the while, but growing colder and more rigid in death every moment, the dead body of Christ hangs loosely on His Cross; and whilst the Virgin Mother and the holy women stand helplessly before it, let us, each sinful soul for itself, approach that white figure of Christ, and ask ourselves what it does all mean for us? Holy Faith teaches us that for each sinful soul was this terrible atonement offered—that for the sins of each Christ suffered—that our souls were present to His eyes through each and every bitter hour of His agony and passion. As surely as He saw the faces of the mob, who were driving Him to death, the face of Pilate who condemned Him, the faces of the priests who hated Him to the end, so surely He saw your soul and mine, hating Him too, alas! mocking Him, crying for His crucifixion, crying in derision at His agony and death.

And if in meditating on these terrible scenes

we despise the traitor who sold his Master, and pity the Apostle who denied Him, and grow angry with the people who clamored for His death, and detest the judge who in his cowardice sentenced Him, and the priests who plotted His destruction, let us spare a little of these angry thoughts for ourselves, for we have a share in it all, and we have been guilty of the blood of Christ, and have betrayed and denied Him, and sentenced Him, and plotted His destruction, and reveled in His sufferings, and only repented them when the darkness came down, and the strength of God was manifested.

For as often as we turned to listen to the voice of passion, as often as we yielded to the seductions of the world, as often as vanity or pride took away our affections from Jesus Christ, so often we denied Him, so often we had a hand in His death. Ah! surely if there be any generosity left us, if our hearts are not hard as granite and as cold as the steel that pierced the heart of Christ, this brief meditation will make a change in our lives for the future.

Let us put down the idols we have erected in the inmost shrine of our hearts, and put up in their places the figure of the Crucified. After all what friend is equal to this friend! Who has done for us what Christ has done? From eternal banishment from the thrones of light, from eternal dwelling in the abodes of darkness, from the fire that scorches, from the worm that bites, from companionship with devils, from the seething pitch and the sulphurous smoke, and the despair that

never dies and the eternity that never ends, the blood of Christ has redeemed us.

By the memory of that blood poured out so lavishly for our sake, by the stripe of the scourging, by the agony of the thorn, by the faintness and weariness, the loneliness and desolation of Christ, I conjure you to make this meditation on Christ's passion the study of your lives.

If ever again your passions disturb you, think that you are tempted to crucify Christ—if ever again you are tempted to be cold and indifferent in His service, think of the weak apostle who denied Him. And if you are tempted to murmur or complain of the cross which the love of God has sent you, fix your eyes on Him—"whose garment is red, and whose raiment as of those who tread the winepress." You are not called upon to take up the Cross alone—you are not invited to tread the winepress alone. The Christ of Calvary is with you. He holds your hands, He guides your steps, He lifts your Cross to relieve you of its pain.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

Christ's Resurrection.—The Triumph of His Divinity

My dearly beloved, one of the greatest of French pulpit orators has made the remark, that, whereas over the graves of the greatest potentates nothing can be written but "Here lieth," or "Here reposeth his mortal remains," no such epitaph could be written of the Crucified Christ.

All the eulogiums, all the adulations that follow men even after death, all the praises written upon their tombstones resolve themselves into this, "Here lieth," "Here reposeth," or rather, "Here was deposited," because nothing is now distinguishable, dust has mingled with dust, and it would take more than human knowledge to discern the dust that was always dust from the dust that once was human.

Nothing similar, however, can be said of Christ; it is not a dumb stone that speaks to us of Him, but a living Angel of Light, and he speaks not to apprise us of the death or the burial, or the sepulchral sleep, but of a great and a glorious resurrection: "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified; He is risen; He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him." Passive during life, death restored to Him the activity of Omnipotence; He

was obedient unto death; but death restored His independence. During His life upon earth, His Divinity was concealed, or at least, it was secondary to the humility of His Humanity; He had a mission to accomplish, and now and again He made use of His Divinity to further His own and His Father's interests; but though all His actions revealed Him to be God, He did not live as God but as man, and the attributes of His Divinity were held in abeyance.

Thus He suffered and thus He died, "led like a sheep to the slaughter, dumb as a lamb before his shearer"; but in death, the dominion of His humanity ceased, and His Divinity assumed its own place, and all His Divine attributes resumed their functions, and thus the grave could not hold Christ; least of all should He suffer dissolution like man; but the Divinity of Christ, having now assumed dominion, glorified the body of Christ, and united body and soul in a union never again to be broken.

That He might suffer, He was abandoned by God—but having died, there was no need of further humiliation; but at once the glory of the Divinity became manifest, and the soul of Christ came back from the abode of the expectant saints and took with it the instrument of its shame and glory and of our Redemption, the dead body in the tomb, and entered into it, and arose with it, having first made it glorious, impassible and immortal.

The debt of the Father's justice was paid, and all His old love that He bore to the Son from eternity returned; His anger was quenched in the streams of the blood of His Son, and as on account

of Christ's obedience even unto death was given Him a name which is above every other name, so for the same humiliation is given Him a glory which had never been reached by man, the glory of conquering death, and remaining incorruptible. "Thou shalt not give," says the Psalmist, "Thy Holy One to see corruption."

This great miracle of the Resurrection has always been regarded by the Catholic Church as the greatest of the miracles of our Divine Lord. Apart from its consequences, it proves more clearly than any other miracle the Divinity of our Lord, and, therefore, it confirms every other miracle, confirms His teaching, puts the prophecies of our Lord beyond dispute, and establishes beyond all possibility of doubt, the Divinity of His mission, and the Divinity of His Person. The Resurrection was not only the crowning glory of His life, the reward of all His sufferings, the consolation of all His humiliations; it was the confirmation of His miracles, of His doctrines, of His prophecies—in a word, of His truth. Without the Resurrection, the life of Christ would have been incomplete. To eyes of Faith, His Divinity was always apparent; even their reason, had it not been blinded by prejudice, would have enabled the Jews to recognize the Divinity of Christ; but the Resurrection, in itself an incontestable proof of Christ's Divinity, so amply confirms and ratifies every other miracle, that we may say that God's omnipotence was exhausted to satisfy the incredulous minds of men that God really was amongst them, that He had died for them, and saved them.

It is, therefore, a great miracle to us to confirm our Faith, and it is also, as St. Augustine remarks, a great example to animate our hope. It is the foundation of our Faith; because it is upon that one miracle Christianity is built; it is the source too, of all Christian morals, because it proves the future resurrection of men from the dead; it, therefore, establishes the truth, that there is a future existence.

Now, it is this future existence that makes life and the duties of life so solemn and awful for us; for our existence in eternity shall be happy or miserable, according as our lives upon earth are holy or unholy; take away that future life, and you take from men all responsibility, you destroy the very notion of virtue. You give the vicious unlimited power to work evil; you take from the virtuous all their consolation and all their hope.

If, as St. Paul says, we do not rise again, if our hopes are to be confined to this world, then, indeed, we are the most wretched of men. For whatever we do is of no avail. Prayer is profitless, for there is nothing to pray for. To what purpose do we watch, and fast, and mortify ourselves, if there were no reward, no risen God to welcome us as His Disciples, for that we bore our crosses faithfully for Him. Therefore, it is in our final Resurrection that all our hopes are laid, and the Resurrection of our Lord on this great solemn feast of Easter is the pledge of the Resurrection, and the future life of every soul which He saved. "In every business or action," says St. Chrysostom, "the hope of a future result is the motive which actuates us; for he who ploweth, ploweth that he

may reap; and he who fighteth, fighteth that he may conquer. Take from man the hope of resurrection, and there is no longer piety or virtue."

The Resurrection of Our Divine Lord, is, therefore, the surest pledge of our resurrection. His Resurrection from the Dead by the intrinsic power of His Divinity is proof of the possession of a complete, unlimited, uncircumscribed Omnipotence. If therefore, as St. Augustine remarks, He could raise Himself to life, why may He not raise others. If He could raise Himself from the dead clothed in the very flesh in which He was crucified and died, why not may we, by the same omnipotence, be restored to life in those same bodies in which we are clothed during life? "If," as the same holy doctor continues, "when He came upon earth, He had assumed as the Manichæan heretics supposed, not a real body, but an ideal and visionary body, or if, when He arose from the dead, He had left in the sepulcher the body in which He died and assumed a body of a different substance, our resurrection might be questioned, though such questions would be nugatory and unmeaning. But it cannot for a moment be suffered impossible that His Omnipotence should effect in us what it effected in Himself."

His power is unchangeable, and the same power that brought back His soul from Limbo, and reunited it with His body and endowed that body with the surpassing qualities of subtility, impassibility, and immortality, can gather our dust, too, from the graves, and build them again into habitations for our souls, palaces or prisons according as our souls shall have merited eternal bliss or

eternal misery. "Behold," says Saint Paul, "I tell you a mystery. We shall all, indeed, rise again; but we shall not all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible. And we shall be changed." We shall be changed; but not in substance, for the Omnipotent Hand of God will reach into the depths of the sea, and the recesses of the earth, and gather together the slime that was once humanity, and sift it, and separate it into personalities, and glorify it to make it worthy of the soul, summoned from Heaven, or doubly degrade it to be a prison for the damned soul more loathsome than hell itself.

"How shall God thus reform the body of our lowliness?" "According to the operation, whereby also He is able to subdue all things to Himself." There can be no doubt then, of the power of God to accomplish this miracle in us. There is still less doubt that such is God's intention. For as St. Leo remarks on the Ascension of Our Lord, it is necessary that where the head is, there too, the members should be. Now, Christ ascended into Heaven in His Sacred glorified Humanity to open heaven to men; for the same reason he triumphed over Death, and broke down the barriers that we, too, might triumph over Death, and rise again to life. He requires His followers during life to lead such lives as He led; He requires them to be crucified to themselves, to die to themselves—to lose their life that they may gain it. He could not make such a demand if He had not an appropriate reward, and no reward can be

appropriated in which the body, which has borne all the sufferings, has not a share.

He glorified His Own Sacred Humanity, and took it up to Heaven, and put it at the right hand of the Eternal Father, because His sufferings and Death have been a source of infinite glory to God, and because His Sacred Humanity was the instrument of God's glory, because it was the subject of all suffering. When, therefore, He requires that we, too, shall suffer in the flesh, He means that we shall be rewarded even in those bodies by which we shall have suffered, which can only be done by raising those bodies from the dead, and endowing them with immortality.

This is the great argument of St. Paul, who writes most strongly and most hopefully of the resurrection of the dead; for he holds that between us and our Divine Master there is established a close and intimate bond of union, so that our eternities shall be like unto His, an eternity of happiness, body and soul, if our lives bear a likeness to His Life, our wills for ever conformed to the will of Our Father, and our bodies brought under complete subjection to our wills. "If there be no resurrection from the dead, Christ is not risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have given testimony against God, that he hath raised up Christ, whom He hath not raised up, if the dead do not rise again. For if the dead do not rise again, neither is Christ risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins.

Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

He goes on to say that Christ is the "first fruits" of them that sleep, and in another place he calls Christ, the "first-born" among the dead. Both these expressions suppose that those whom He has saved will rise like Himself; for why is Christ the "first fruits," but because others are to follow? And why is Christ called "first-born" if not because others are to be born after Him by a resurrection into a new life.

But not only does our Lord's Resurrection prove His omnipotence to restore us to life, and His will that we should rise like Him, but it is also the model of our Resurrection. In all things, our Resurrection will be like unto His, for, as St. Paul says, "He will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory." He rose from the tomb incorruptible, immortal, impassible, glorious, even more glorious than He appeared to the Apostles in His transfiguration. He will restore to us at our Resurrection the bodies which at death we yield up to Him; but changed, transformed, glorified, immortal. "So also," says St. Paul, "is the resurrection from the dead. It is sown in corruption; it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness; it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body; it shall rise a spiritual body." Whatever is great and striking and sublime in the Resurrection of Christ, our Resurrections shall equally possess; remaining material, our bodies shall be invested with all the properties

of Spirits, "made like to the body of the glory of Christ," clothed in light, conquering Death, crowned with everlasting splendor.

This is our hope and our reward, as it has been the hope and reward of the saints and just from all time. "I know," said Holy Job, in the depth of his affliction, "that my Redeemer liveth, and on the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again in my flesh, and I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; this my hope is laid up in my bosom." And St. Paul, when writing to the Thessalonians, bade them be of hope concerning their friends who were dead. "We will not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you be not sorrowful, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them who have slept through Jesus will God bring with Him." And again and again, in that wonderful discourse in which Our Lord promises to give Himself as Eucharistic food, He says that He will raise up His own on the last day, that He will give them eternal life.

"This is the will of the Father who sent me: that of all He hath given to me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again on the last day. And this is the will of the Father who sent me: that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up on the last day."

"No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him, and I will raise him up on the last day." "He that eateth My Flesh

and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

This, then, is the reward promised by Christ to those who serve Him worthily. It is a triumph over sin, and a triumph over death. It is a triumph over sin, because it will be the restoration to humanity of that perfection of body and mind that belonged to man before his fall. However we encourage our vanity, or lean upon our pride, we cannot conceal from ourselves the humiliating fact that we are in a degraded condition of mind and body, that we are not what God intended us to be, that our nature has suffered a deterioration, and that of ourselves we cannot improve it.

We lost a great deal by original sin, but we were left this unhappy consciousness of our degradation. We are blind in intellect, and we know it, know that for ever we are "stumbling in darkness—walking in dark places like dead men." We feel deeply every one of us the slavery in which we are to this weak, corrupt, sinful, rebellious flesh of ours. There is no high-minded man that does not feel keenly the humiliation of his soul, that for ever aspires to fly to God and to be at rest, but is bound down to earth by those earthly bonds that are so tyrannical and hateful but yet so powerful. And all this the effect of sin. But when the Omnipotent love of God shall restore us those bodies in the Resurrection all that humiliation and tyranny will be at an end. For the intellect will be as unclouded as that of an Angel, and the body purified of its concupiscences. And then, and not till then, the empire of sin and the effects of sin shall be at an end.

Death, too, shall relinquish all his victories, by relinquishing his claim over us. It is the greatest punishment of sin, and nature shrinks, and no natural strength of mind can help one to bear the thought of it with composure.

It is a terrible thing to go into the grave and to be lost to the world. But the hope of Resurrection takes from Death its sting and its victory. Now, it is not at all terrible to go into the grave when we know we shall again spring from the grave, glorified and purified. It is not at all terrible to be lost to this world for a time, that we may be re-united to a happier and better world of Beings for Eternity.

But all this implies a condition. It was because Christ was crucified He arose. We shall not rise unless we, too, be crucified with Him. Our restoration is a tedious process. It requires three agents: death, the instrument of God, the Omnipotence of God to raise us from the dead, and we, who are to crucify ourselves, as the executioners crucified Christ. We shall not rise glorious and immortal, unless we die; we shall not rise, unless God's omnipotence raises us; neither shall we rise unless we are crucified by mortification, as Christ was crucified upon the Cross. And the greater our trials, the greater will be our glory.

We know that even on the glorified body of Christ, His five wounds show with surpassing splendor, and every stripe of His scourging was changed into a bar of glorious light. And the punctures of the thorns emitted rays, like to the horns of light which shone on the head of Moses

when he descended from Sinai. So shall it be with us—every fast, every mortification, every victory over our stubborn wills, and the perversity of our pride, will increase the splendor of our Resurrection. You will say, perhaps, that surely the season of penance is past and this is the time of rejoicing. But, remember, this is the feast of Christ, not ours, this is the Easter of Him who was Crucified, and who actually died; but our passion yet continues, and will continue until our agony of death. Rejoice, if you will, that Christ is risen; but do not forget that yet you are treading the hill of Calvary, and as every step on that painful journey hastened the death of Jesus, by the loss of blood and the agony it cost Him, so may our daily journey to death through life hasten our death to self and to the world, that God's omnipotence may not find in us anything unpurified by mortification, but everything to facilitate our resurrection in the likeness of the body of the glory of Christ.

This expostulation, addressed by the angels to the Apostles, appears at first sight somewhat strange. "Men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven?" Nothing can be conceived more natural or praiseworthy than the action of the Apostles. Their Divine Master, Who had just spoken to them and blessed them, had been lifted up from amongst them, until a cloud intervened and hid Him away from their sight.

Whether we consider the character of our Divine Lord Himself, or His relations to His disciples, this disappearance of their Divine Master could not but have been regarded as a serious affliction. He, who had left them was One whom to know was to love, whose kindness and amiability had bound the disciples inseparably to Him, whose omnipotence was so concealed by humility that whilst they never forgot that He was God, yet always loved Him as a friend and a brother; the holiness of whose life had imbued them with reverential fear of Him, and the excess of whose charity has so often perplexed them. He, who had for three years filled so large a portion of their lives, was taken from them, and they were not to see Him again until death. What wonder that they gaze into the Heaven in which He was lost to them. And yet the angels asked, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven?"

Furthermore, it must be remembered, that He

Who had just vanished from them was one Whom they not only loved as a Master, but One also on whom they depended for happiness in this world and Salvation in eternity; for Him they had sacrificed everything. "Behold," said Saint Peter, "we have left all, and followed thee!" Each had forsaken his customary duties at the call of Christ; literally fulfilled the precept of abandoning father and mother, brother and sister and wife, to become the disciple of Jesus, to follow Him whither He went, to share His privations, to be the partners of His sorrows, and all this was done in the simple, confiding faith that their Master had a reward for each in the glories of another life to which the sorrows of this one were not to be compared. Whilst He was with them they had a security of this reward.

But now He had left them, and that reward was not forthcoming. Nay, worse, they had cast in their lot with Jesus; they were the disciples of one whom the world had rejected. They were bound to teach His doctrines, to continue His practices, to inculcate the same morality, to preach things utterly distasteful to the world; and they had the *same* prospect before them of being treated as He had been: outraged, scoffed at, despised: and bounding and finishing this dismal prospect there was the cross, the rack, the executioner's sword, the wild beasts, and then, perhaps, a despised and execrated memory after death. Gazing upon all these things from that hill of Olivet, they gave a proof of the truth of that saying in the Imitation of Christ, "When Jesus is with us, everything is well; when Jesus is absent, everything is ill."

Whilst their Divine Master was with them everything was well; they had no fear, no apprehension; they could despise the world and brave the anger of the world with Him and for His sake. But now that their Divine Master had gone, they felt that they were orphaned, deserted, and in their helplessness they looked into Heaven. A little time ago He had told them this, and sorrow had filled their hearts; and if the bare prediction could thus affect them, much more the reality, and, therefore, they stood irresolute on the hillside of Olivet. And if ever looks are prayers, and prayers do violence to heaven, it was then, when in a feeling of utter helplessness they looked upwards where Jesus had become invisible to them, hoping against hope that He would return again. And yet the angels ask them, "Why stand ye looking up towards heaven," as if the departure of Jesus were an event of no importance—one that should not be allowed to disturb their minds, or to interrupt the ordinary duties of life.

Dearly beloved, the Angels did not rebuke the Apostles for their love for their Divine Master, nor for the wish of seeing Him again, but they rebuked them for the want of a simple, confiding faith in God. They rebuked them not so much for the wish of self-protection as for their diffidence in God's protection. They rebuked them because they did not place sufficient reliance upon the word of Christ, and were not satisfied with a promise, but demanded His presence. They rebuked them because they could not bear the absence of God for a time in order to do the will of God. Because instead of promptly undertak-

ing the mission given them by their Divine Master, they looked for a helper from Heaven. Because instead of depending upon the promise of their Divine Master, and relying upon His invisible assistance they sought a visible sign of God's protection, and His constant presence with them. And thus instead of commencing their mission with hope and courage, and the firm trust that God would not forsake them, they stood upon Olivet, hesitating, irresolute, vainly hoping that their Divine Master would descend again amongst them, or would send some visible supernatural guide that would make the work of converting the world easy, and they could share in the triumph and the honor and the reward, without being exposed to peril or discomfort. In truth, they had as yet rather unchristian views of the life of a Christian, and hence the rebuke of the angels.

We must remember that Pentecost had not come yet. They were now in the interval between the departure of Christ and the coming of the Paraclete. And they had neither the presence of their Divine Master to animate them, nor the grace of the Holy Ghost to strengthen them. In a sense, it was the most trying time of their lives. Hitherto they had not been without their Divine Guide, and after Pentecost the Holy Ghost would never be absent from them or their successors. But now they had to live upon a promise. They were, therefore, just as they had been when Jesus had met them, rude and uncultured, and their faith still unconfirmed and wavering, and their hopes inconstant, and their charity rather the rude, natural affection of generous minds for goodness

than the supernatural love which the Paraclete afterwards inspired. In truth, it was the first time that the exercise of faith and hope and charity was demanded of them.

For hitherto they had seen, and there was no room for disbelief; now they could see no longer, and God demanded faith of them. Hitherto they had possessed the one good for which they were created, and they had nothing else to hope for. But Jesus had left them, and they were filled with vague yearnings after security and happiness, and God demanded of them that they should confide in Him. Hitherto they had loved one whose presence had inspired affection; now it was demanded of them that they should love an Invisible God—this was the exercise of their charity. And as yet they had not had the supernatural assistance or illumination of the Holy Spirit.

This, therefore, was a severe test of their faith, and if there were a mild rebuke in the words of the Angels, there was also a lesson in Christianity.

This way of reprimand was one of the many ways in which our Divine Lord conveyed his instructions to His disciples. This want of confidence in Him He had rebuked before when He said to them, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" And when they seemed to hesitate in their belief about His promise of giving them His flesh to eat, He said to them, "Will ye, too, go away?" and in His agony He asked them "Could you not watch one hour with Me?" Now His Angels are speaking in like manner, "Why look you up towards heaven?" as if they would say, "O ye of little faith! do ye not believe that God

is with you, even though visibly removed from amongst you? And instead of useless repinings after His presence and visible protection, why do you not rather busy yourselves about His work, confiding in God that He will reward your generosity in sacrificing your own interests to repay further His? Do you not know that this Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, still lives, watching invisibly over you and your work, and will live, until at the end of all things He shall come as you have now seen Him ascend into heaven?"

This want of faith in the Apostles is one of those imperfections that it is hard to distinguish from virtue. Humanly speaking, we should say that the action of the Apostles is just what should be expected; it argues a great love for their Divine Master, and if they had been unaffected by His Ascension, we should have but poor opinions of their gratitude and affection. That which we censure in them as a fault, is, nevertheless, a virtue we should wish to see more widely practiced in the world of to-day.

This want of confidence in God made them look to God for help; though their faith was somewhat staggered by the disappearance of their Divine Master, still they had faith enough to know that their only support was God, and they did not for a moment think of turning away from God to seek consolation elsewhere.

Nowadays, men place no reliance upon God at all, nor do they even believe that God can assist them. They never seek supernatural guidance or assistance, but when in need of consolation or sup-

port they look to creatures for that which can be found in God alone. This infidelity, in the sense of ignoring God's assistance and support, is the prevalent vice of the world to-day, and compared with this, the conduct of the unconfirmed Apostles is eminently praiseworthy. But there is a faith more exalted than either—the faith that is required of a perfect Christian.

I am not speaking of faith now in the sense of believing revealed truths. I am not speaking of faith as the assent of the intellect to doctrines which are wrapped in mystery. I am speaking of faith in the sense of confidence in God's protecting love. What then do I mean by perfect faith in God? I mean the absolute security which every Christian ought to possess of that truth of Saint Paul, "that in God, we live and move and have our being"; that we are surrounded on all sides by God, and that in God we possess an omnipotent and most loving defender of soul and body. By this faith in God I mean the absolute reliance upon His goodness to supply all our wants, and to relieve all our necessities—a reliance that never wavers, never doubts, never suspects, but is always firm and constant and unyielding.

What is this faith in God? It is to know and to believe firmly, and to shape all our actions, thoughts, and desires according to his knowledge and His belief, that we are in the hands of a merciful God; that the meanest of us, if any of God's creatures can be called mean, is an object of infinite interest in His eyes, that He watches over us with unceasing care, preserving us from the thou-

sand dangers to which we are exposed, guiding us securely along the rugged ways that lead to Himself, ever ready with His thousand graces to assist us in our difficulties, and to ensure for us that salvation which He purchased for us at so dear a price. This is the virtue most clearly and directly opposed to the avowed infidelity of those outside the Church, and even to the practical infidelity of some within the Church.

For this perfect confidence in God rests upon the firmest conviction of Divine faith in God's existence. This virtue is far more perfect than the wavering faith of the Apostles. For it enables us to live in such perfect assurance of God's protection, that we do not ask it in time of temptation and trouble, but assume it as something that cannot be refused, and make use of it as something always ready at hand.

Least of all do we require visible signs from Heaven of its protection—or the voice of God to comfort us or daily miracles to prove God's unbounded love towards us. The Apostles dreaded to face the world without the visible presence of their Divine Master. They were overpowered by the thought of the mighty mission that had been given to them, and calculating only their own natural powers, they were filled with apprehension at their own unfitness for this gigantic work, and, therefore, they stood upon Olivet gazing ineffectually into Heaven instead of at once setting about the work of their Divine Master, in the firm belief that He was yet with them, that His Omnipotence was still around them—that it was His work they were doing—His will they were accomplishing—

and that God would betray Himself if ever He abandoned them, and withdrew His protection from them. This faith they possessed after Pentecost, and thus in their succeeding history we read of no doubts or hesitation whatsoever—no looking up into Heaven, straining their eyes after a Second Advent; but they proclaimed boldly the truth of their Divine Master to the world, without thinking even of the end. No angels are now sent to reprimand them, but they are deputed to quicken the low faith of the world.

And if we would go back for a moment into the age of the patriarchs, we shall find many examples of such perfect confiding faith as that of which I speak. Notably in the instance of him, whose repentance brought him nearer to God than, perhaps, steadfast virtue could have done. Every line of his majestic psalms is eloquent of trust in God, and this because evidently the existence of God is not to him a bare abstract truth, but a fact which is as real as his own existence.

"The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture and though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evils for Thou art with me.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear; the Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid. If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear.

"Our God is our refuge and our strength; a helper in troubles which have found us exceedingly. Therefore, we will not fear when the earth

shall be troubled, and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea."

And whence did he get this faith? From his strong belief in God's existence, which we might almost say he felt, so firm was his conviction.

If we examine ourselves we shall find that we often err in this particular. If we find ourselves slothful about our salvation, we may be sure it arises from our imperfect faith in God's existence. If, on the other hand, we are inclined to yield to despondency, it arises likewise from imperfect faith in God. We, like the Apostles, have been sent upon a mighty mission, It is not to found a Church—but to save our souls. And if it is not as important a work as that which was given to the Apostles, it is, at least, as important for each individual. And as dangers and perplexities of every kind stared them in the face, so we, too, may expect to find many things to disquiet, alarm and discourage us. Critical circumstances will arise in which, like the Apostles, we would wish to see our Blessed Lord visibly, for we feel we cannot rely upon ourselves. Now and again we shall be placed in some dilemma in which we cannot trust to our own judgments, but feel most keenly the need of a counselor.

SERMONS ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN

The Woman and Child

There is always a difficulty in treating of supernatural things. However we may have tried to bring it home to our understandings, and to master it in all its details, there is always a consciousness that we have failed. And even when we have called to our assistance the word of God, and the Fathers of the Church, to enable ourselves to comprehend fully our subject under study, there always remains an uneasy feeling that we have mastered, not the subject itself, but our ideas of it; and that our words have merely gone to express our own sense, but have been utterly inadequate to describe that supernatural truth to the minds of others.

In a certain sense, this is more true of the mystery of the Immaculate Mother of God than of any other mystery of Christian Revelation. Because in approaching all other mysteries we acknowledge them to be mysteries, and confess our own inability to comprehend them; but in speaking of God's Mother we grow, through familiarity, perhaps, into the mistake of believing that we are speaking of a subject that comes within the range of human knowledge. And it is only when we have recognized the truth that if the Incarnate God be the greatest of all mysteries,

the Mother of the Incarnate God must participate in that mystery, that we shelter ourselves under our humility, leaving to God the knowledge of His mysteries, and retaining only our wonder and admiration for Him and them.

This mystic character has been given to the Mother of God by her close relations with her Divine Son. The Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ conferred upon His Mother a dignity proportioned to His humiliation. He humbled Himself, and she was exalted in the humiliation. He became Man, and she became the Mother of God. The deeper He descended the higher she ascended. He emptied Himself of His glory, and clothed her with it. He laid aside all His supernatural powers and qualities, and descended upon earth to mingle amongst men, and behold! He raised His Mother at the same time from her place amongst men, and endowed her with supernatural powers and supernatural graces.

He robbed earth of a great deal that He may make a larger compensation to earth—taking from earth a Mother, and giving it a Son; taking from earth its purest and holiest daughter, from men their best beloved sister, and giving Himself in return, infinitely purer, infinitely holier than she, and yearning to be better-beloved through her and for her sake. And thus Jesus met His Mother half-way between heaven and earth, she raised to meet Him and He descending to meet her, thus Mother and Child were united, and there, united and inseparable, they live for ever in the Christian fancy.

The mystery of the Mother and Child, there-

fore, remains the great mystery of Christian Revelation. It is one great central mystery upon which the others converge. And they who try to separate the Mother from the Child are consciously or unconsciously undermining the truth of His Incarnation. They are counteracting the designs of God's Providence and undoing the very work upon which God has been laboring for eternity.

Among those who are capable of comprehending this subject, there is nowadays but a very narrow field for discussion of the privileges of the great Mother of God. It would be difficult in our days to find any one who would have the hardihood of asserting that the Angel Gabriel might have been sent to any other Hebrew woman as to Mary, or that the maternity of the Blessed Virgin was a mere instrumentality which conferred no privileges upon her, needed not the special preparation of the Spirit, and left no dignity or unsurpassed holiness.

There are few who do not recognize that there is a close connection between the functions assigned to her and the grace conferred upon her, and though not often spoken of in Scripture, they who understand its spirit, and that there is a meaning in its silence as well as in its utterances, acknowledge that the Word of God assigns to her the very place which is given to her in the Litanies of the Church, Queen of Patriarchs, of Prophets, of Apostles, of all Saints, surpassed in holiness only by the Author of all Sanctity Himself.

This gives us larger ideas of the dignity of the Mother of God, but they fall far short of the

reality. Because here we are tracing her dignity only to the moment of Incarnation, whereas Mary filled the mind of God years before creation, and entered largely into the designs of God in fashioning His universe and perfecting it.

In the schools of theology there has always been taught a very sublime doctrine concerning the Incarnation; and although it is not a defined dogma of faith, it has always found many advocates, both because it affords a simple answer to the sophisms of science, and because it gives us a better knowledge of the benevolence of God. It is this: that the Fall of Man is not entirely the cause of the Incarnation, that our Divine Lord would have become man, even though man had never fallen. The Fall of Man imparted to the Incarnation its expiatory character, but God would have become man if there had been no sin to be expiated; and He could have become man not for the redemption of one race of men, living on a single planet, but for the exaltation of the entire universe. According to this opinion, then, the Incarnation entered into the original design of God about His Creation. The Incarnation was not an afterthought suggested by the sin of Adam. It was not a penalty demanded by the justice of God for original sin. And it was not at all the primary design of God that His Son should come upon earth as a Victim.

These accidents were added to the Incarnation by the sin of Adam. But it was the design of God from eternity, that His Son should assume a created form and live as a creature not primarily to redeem the race of men upon earth, but to

bind the Universe more closely to its Creator.

The Incarnation, therefore, formed part of the original designs of God in framing His universe; and without the Incarnation creation would be incomplete. It would be finite, and at a distance from its maker; His blind instrument, fulfilling His will, not voluntarily, but through the compulsion of His omnipotence—a gorgeous temple, worthy of the majesty of God, and admirably fitted to sound His praises—but without a priest, and without worshipers.

But how was God to unite Himself to creation? By assuming the nature of man. For creation is two-fold—spiritual and material. If God assumed the nature of an angel, the material part of His creation would still be separated from Him. By assuming the Nature of Man, He linked Himsel to creation's spiritual and material elements. For the Body of Man is the highest type of material nature, and the soul of man is the lowest in the scale of Spiritual natures. And therefore God assumed the Body and the Soul of Man, for in man's nature the two creations met, the spiritual nature in its descending, and material creation in its ascent.

Thus in the Incarnation creation would find a king to rule it in equity, a priest to direct its worship and to offer its adorations. This was the enigma of Heaven, this was the test of the angels. Faith—the humiliation of God, whom they had never seen but in the splendors of His Majesty, to a hypostatic union with the humble human material. Creation—"The word was made flesh," as St. John says, was the test of the spirits.

Those who turned aside and refused their supreme worship to their God in that lowly form perished. Those who received the Revelation received at the same time the reward of their obedience—confirmation in glory, and indefectibility in grace.

And thus we enumerate the three mighty effects of Incarnation: to fallen man it restored his birthright, to the angels of Heaven it gave eternal security in grace, and to the material creation it has given a relation to God unseen by us, until that which of us is material shall be spiritualized in the Resurrection of the Dead. Here, then, we have three great truths.

That the union of the Creator with His creation by means of the Incarnation is the ultimate end and perfection of creation, and therefore the primary idea in the mind of God. The Fall of Man determined that Incarnation should be completed by Redemption, and therefore is our Divine Lord called the "Lamb slain from the beginning of the world." The second truth is that the universe has been created for our Divine Lord—it is His temple, His tabernacle. All things led up to Him and are perfected in Him. He is the completion of that which without Him were for ever incomplete. He is the keystone of the arch of the Universe, and He is its Pontiff and its King.

And thirdly, the Son, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, was chosen to unite creation to its Maker because He is the first-born of every creature. He is the uncreated image of God, as the souls of men are its created images. God's eternal idea of Himself. His living, uncreated likeness, not a creature, but the type in origin of

all creatures, was chosen by Infinite Wisdom to unite with Himself His created brethren upon earth. This made St. John declare that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made." And again in the Canon of the Mass the Church declares that "by Him, and with Him, and in Him is to Thee, God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory."

Now, from all this it is evident that the Incarnation of His Divine Son filled the mind of God from eternity. But it is also clear that this stupendous miracle could not have been conceived by God independently of the mode in which it was to be performed, and that mode was the Divine Maternity of the Blessed Virgin. Simultaneously, therefore, that is from eternity, these two ideas existed in the mind of the Eternal Father, the Incarnation of His Son and the Maternity of the Mother—in other words, Jesus and Mary.

It is impossible that they could have been separated—the one idea could not be present without the other. For if the Redeemer was first in the Divine intention, as One through whom all things should be made, His Mother was conceived with Him in the mind of God, because it was through her He was to become Incarnate. And if Mary was present to the minds of Micheas and Isaias, when the prophecy was made "That a virgin should conceive and bring forth a son, and His Name should be called Emmanuel," we can only conclude that from eternity she existed in the mind of God, from whom those Prophets ob-

tained an insight into the future, but to whom there was no future, no past, but a vast unmeasured present.

Hence does the church apply to the Mother of God these words spoken by Uncreated Wisdom: "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the first-born before all creatures. From the beginning and before the world was I created. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the world was made. The depths were not as yet and I was already conceived."

If we master this one idea we shall find in it the key of many mysteries. It affords us at once a powerful confirmation, if there were need, of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. For according to this doctrine, the second Eve was prior to the first, not in order of time, but in the conception of God.

She was not only highest in dignity, but she was the first in the divine intention, the first in God's design of the work of creation. And thus existing before Eve, she could not be subject to the penalty of the sin of Eve; or, rather, this prior existence before the mind of God gave her a kind of right that she should be exempted from the penalty which every child of Adam contracts. Of course the principal cause of her exemption was the merits of her Divine Son, who redeemed her by anticipation. But she had a right to those merits, founded upon the fact that she had existed in the mind of God from eternity, and the accidental circumstance of her creation in time could

not violate that right of immunity from Original Sin.

Again, according to this theory, Mary is the link between Heaven and earth: for through the Incarnation the union of God with His creation was effected, and Mary was the instrument of the Incarnation.

Now, what does this expression mean, and what are its necessary consequences? If the Incarnation be the union of God and His Universe, that is, the finite with the Infinite, the Creator with His creatures—it is clear that the Creator would choose for that union the highest of His creatures —the one who, remaining a creature, yet approached nearest to His own infinite perfections.

It involved infinite humiliation upon the part of God to become man at all; but having issued His eternal decree to that effect, and that decree being thus irrevocable, it was due to the majesty of the Son that His communication with creatures should be effected in a way befitting His dignity.

If it had pleased the Eternal Father this could have been done in many ways. He could have fashioned a body for His Son from the slime of the earth, as he had done for Adam; or He could have given Him a celestial or visionary body, as some heretics supposed; but He had determined that as the Son was born of the Father from eternity, He should be born of a mother in time. It only remained for His infinite wisdom to devise and His omnipotence to create a mother befitting the Eternal Word. And such a mother is Mary.

One thing, therefore, and one thing alone, bounds and limits her dignity and excellence.

She is a creature and finite. Refuse to her those excellences that belong exclusively to God, but she possesses every excellence that can consist with the character of a creature.

And all this she owes to her close relation with God, her Son. Look where you will into the eternity of the past, or into the eternity of the future, that Sign shines out clearly and distinctly, the Mother and Child.

From eternity, and of old before the earth was made, that sign was present to the mind of God. When the foundations of the earth were laid, God blessed His universe for the sake of the Woman and Child. When the earth was cursed by the sin of man, that curse was alleviated by a promise of future blessedness that was to be given to the world by the Woman and her Child.

As time went by, and the hour for the fulfillment of the promise came nearer, the sign grew more distinct; and she, that in the original promise was "the seed of the woman," now became "the Virgin that was to be conceived without sin." The first glimpse we catch of her in the Holy Scriptures is with her Child, for it is the moment of the Annunciation, and she has paid the memorable vow of obedience to God, which is rewarded by the fulfillment of the eternal promises. Wherever Jesus moves in the pages of Holy Writ, Mary is ever at His side, from Bethlehem to Calvary. "There stood by the Cross of Jesus Mary, His Mother." And as a holy writer has remarked, you can no more imagine Mary coming down from Calvary that hour, than a priest descending from the altar in the midst of the Holy

Sacrifice. Again, the sign appears in the Vision of John, and at last is fixed in Heaven before the mind of the Universal Church, the Mother still inseparable from her Child, guarding her Child, and blessing the world.

We live in the hope that one day we, too, shall behold that blessed sign, when our reverence for Him as God and for her as His Mother will be blended with love for Him as Redeemer and for her as Protector. Mary has had a distinguished history, and holds the first place amongst the children of God. May she add new luster to her glory by her dealings with us, and increase for eternity the number of her worshipers in heaven by now adopting us as her clients upon earth.

The Immaculate Conception

"Fear not, thou shalt not die; not for thee but for these has the law been made."—Esther xv. 12–13.

The assistance which God renders His immortal Church, illuminating the minds of Her teachers with His wisdom and inspiring the faithful with a spirit of docile piety and implicit belief, is in nothing more evident than in the progress and development of devotion to the Blessed Mother of God.

The vision of the woman clothed with the sun, with the stars around her head, and the moon beneath her feet, is to us Catholics, thank God, nothing mysterious or apocalyptic. We see in it but Mary, the Mother of God, and our Mother—the solitary boast and only perfection of our fallen nature.

Woman, yet more than angel; human, yet raised to a perfection it is not given to any other creature to attain; created and finite, but in the world of grace omnipotent—such is Mary, and as such do we reverence her, mingling our reverence with tenderest affection and unfailing confidence. And the Church of God, enlightened by His Holy Spirit, has at all times recognized in this Virgin attributes more than human, more than angelic—perfection nearer to God's infinite perfection than the united perfections of all the saints and angels that have ever been, or ever shall be, created.

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It is of one of those high privileges, the privilege of Immaculate Conception, that I speak to you this evening.

It was decreed by God at the fall of our first parents that as their posterity would have inherited a right to eternal happiness if God's commands had not been disobeyed, so, too, they should inherit the taint of sin with which their parents had defiled themselves at the suggestion of the tempter. Therefore, every child is born into this world with the stain of sin upon its soul—an enemy to its Creator, a slave to the powers of darkness—with no right to Heaven, that was shut against it by sin.

The law is universal. The greatest saints have not been privileged with exemption. God's justice will not remit the stern punishment until every soul shall have paid the penalty attached to that one original transgression. Once and once only did he create a soul that was never, even for an instant, defiled with the slightest sin—once and once only did he create a soul that was as pure at the instant of conception as it is now in Heaven—once and once only did he relax the stern judgment on our race and clothe a soul with original justice and sanctity and innocence and grace superabounding with attributes of ineffable grandeur—a soul on which the least shadow of sin never for an instant rested—a soul to which the Almighty could ever turn to gaze upon with pleasure when weary of the deformity which sin had stamped upon mankind.

It was the time when the fullness of years having come that the Son was to leave His Father's

bosom and take flesh amongst men to redeem them. The Most Holy Trinity had to design and create and send into the world the soul of her who was destined to be Mother of the Incarnate Son.

For centuries God had not created a soul in grace; He fashioned and formed them, and sent them into the world, but with the seal of sin and eternal death upon them—in the power of His enemy before they had left His omnipotent hands. But now the old time was for an instant to come back again, when the Almighty could look upon His work and say that it was good, and that it did not repent Him that He made it.

Nay more. The angels are very beautiful, but they fell; but now was to be created a woman, brighter than the brightest angel, and with holiness and innocence, which Adam could not hope to attain, and she shall not fall, but be full of grace, and confirmed in grace from the first moment of her conception. Again, Adam, however great, had no higher destiny than we; the angels, however fair, had to worship God afar off; but she that was now to be created was destined to be in closest union with her Creator for all eternity, to be Mother of Him before whom the angels are not found pure, whose tabernacle is the sun, and who bows the heavens beneath His feet; she was to possess the glorious privilege of Divine Maternity, while her pure virginity remained intact; she was to be the sanctuary in which the Most High should ever dwell, she was to have for her Son the Creator and Father of all things, and she was to coöperate with the Almighty in the

great work of human redemption by giving birth to the long-expected Messias.

And the Father, putting forth His omnipotent power, and the Son, exhausting the treasures of His love, and the Holy Ghost, breathing on their counsels his ineffable wisdom, the Soul of Mary sprang into existence, from the hands of the Holy Trinity "coming forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, shining in the temple of God, as the morning star in the midst of a cloud."[1] Thus was Mary conceived, the fairest soul that ever came from the hands of God, endowed by the Holy Spirit with his choicest gifts, most prudent, most chaste, undefiled, inviolate.

And God wondered at His own handiwork, and the Angels adored their Queen in speechless awe at her surpassing beauty, and Hell trembled at the Conception of a woman that was destined to destroy the power of its Prince. Conceived Immaculate—fulfilling the promise of the Psalmist: "The Most High hath sanctified His Tabernacle." "Fear not, thou shalt not die, not for thee, but for these has the law been made." "The hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, therefore wilt thou be blessed for ever."

Well might Mary explain: "Come ye, and hear what great things the Lord has done for my soul." "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of my ways, before He made anything from the beginning: I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made: the depths were not as yet, and I was already Conceived." Conceived Immaculate—fairer than unfallen Eve—our second

[1] Cant. c. vi., v. 9.

Mother that retrieved through her Son the fall of the first, and freed us in her own person from the taint upon our race that man was necessarily the slave of Sin and the enemy of his Maker. Conceived Immaculate—to be the source of joy to millions of unborn Catholics that were to be proud to acknowledge the high privilege of their Queen. Conceived Immaculate, and not priding herself on her purity to despise us impure, but constituting herself by reason of her very sinlessness our advocate with God—the defense of our virtue and the apologist for our crimes—our shield on the one hand from the fiery darts of the evil one, and on the other from the anger of the Living God.

We enjoy the privilege of being the first generation of the Children of God that has been called upon by the authoritative voice of His Church to accept the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as part of the great body of Catholic faith.

It has been the lot of many of us to behold the teaching Church of Christ, her Doctors, her Pontiffs, her Apostles, and the Vicar of Christ himself, declare after lengthened deliberation and in solemn Councils, that this was a truth evermore to be believed by every Catholic, that the Mother of God, in view of her privilege of Divine maternity, was by a special grace preserved from incurring Original Sin. And we have seen the faithful of the Church of Christ, in whose hearts that doctrine had ever been piously believed, accept with acclamations of joy and triumph the verdict of their pastors, and cry out with a unanimity as remarkable as that of the Ephesians when the priv-

ilege of Mary's Divine Maternity was vindicated: "Blessed for ever be the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God!"

And herein is discernible the workings of that spirit of harmony, of that nice sense of discrimination of what is congruous or unbefitting in the worship of God and His holy ones, which is a special characteristic of the Catholic Church.

In other communions we have nothing but chaos and wild confusion, doctrine clashing with doctrine and creed with creed. But in the Catholic Church everything moves in uniform harmony. Interpreting the will of God, as God Himself has appointed, she builds up altars here and there to the princes of His household, and leaves the wide infinity for God Himself. She looks with pleasure at her faithful worshiping around those altars, well knowing that in honoring and reverencing the virtues of the saints, we but honor and reverence the attributes of God as manifested in these, His servants, and seeing with eyes of inspiration that the incense of praise and prayer that circles for a moment around the altars of the saints finds its last resting-place around the throne of God Himself.

In nothing is this spirit of harmony more observable than in the belief in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which always existed in the Church.

It was this instinct, inspired by the Holy Ghost, that made the Saints of God from apostolic times vindicate this privilege for their Mother; it was this sense of what was befitting the majesty of the Redeemer that made Saint Ambrose declare Mary

"a Virgin untouched by the slightest stain of sin"; that made Saint Augustine say, that when speaking of sin there should be no question of Mary, and it was the same inspiration that heaped upon Mary from the pens and lips of her devoted servants such titles as "Ever Blessed," "Daughter of God," "Born of God," "Only Daughter of Life," "Tabernacle of the Most High," "Immaculate Child of God," "Gate of Grace," "The New Heaven," "The Sweet Ointment," "The Foundation of all Divine Grace." And it was this same teaching of the Holy Spirit—that it was befitting that Mary, who was to be Mother of God, Mother of the Messias, and mediatrix between her Son and sinners, should not be conceived in sin—it was this same teaching that led the Church of Christ, Her pastors and His Vicar to declare the Immaculate Conception an Article of Catholic belief.

He taught them, to be sure, and they teach us, that there was a law so general that it might be called universal, the law that entailed upon every child of Adam the penalty of his father's sin; but he taught them, too, that there was another law, equally universal, and, what is more, immutable—a law sanctioned by the words of the Redeemer Himself, "that a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit." How then could Mary—in the hypothesis, that even for the sake of argument I am afraid to make, namely, that she was conceived in sin—bring forth Jesus the sinless? How could Mary, defiled with original guilt, bring forth Him before whom the angels are not found pure? How could Mary with concupiscences, like other creatures, of weakened will and darkened intellect, bring forth

Him who is all-seeing and whose every will is a work? Therefore, if Jesus is sinless, and pure, and perfect, She from whom He sprang must have been pure, and sinless, and perfect—not, indeed, with a perfection equal to that of the Divinity, but with a perfection which no other creature has ever attained.

Again, Mary was to be Mother of the Redeemer. She it was that was to crush the serpent's head; it was for her heel the Devil was to lie in wait; this was the Woman between whom and the tempter God Himself had placed everlasting enmity. And was it befitting that she through whom the Deliverer should come should herself be a slave? That she, whose hatred of sin and Hell should be so intense and perpetual, should actually be under the power of both? And how can it be believed that God should design that there should be a never-ending war between the Mother of His Son and the powers of darkness, and at the same time frustrate this design by placing her in their power.

She was to repair the fall of our First Mother, Eve. "Thou alone, O blessed Mother of God," cries a distinguished Saint, "who didst bring forth the Redeemer and Savior of all, thou alone hast repaired the sin of Eve." "Through thee the condemnation of our race through Adam has been revoked, and Man has been reconciled with his Maker." And who shall say that Mary, who restored the integrity of our race, was less perfect than Eve who destroyed it? Yet Eve was created in a state of original justice and sanctity and in-

nocence, and Mary, forsooth, was conceived in Original Sin.

Lastly, Mary was to be evermore Mediator between God and man. She was to occupy a position infinitely inferior to that of her Divine Son, but above men and angels and the highest choirs of spirits in Heaven—alone and unapproachable. From her high position she was to distribute God's graces and favors to men. She was to be the almoner of Heaven. God reserved to Himself His Justice and Power; but He clothed Mary with His Mercy. And to her were the eyes of sinners for ever to be turned; to her were they to fly for protection; she was to be their refuge and asylum, and a terror to the powers of Hell. And when she lifted up her pure hands to her Divine Son, think you that He could allow His enemies to sneer at His Mother for that she was once in their power: "Physician, heal thyself!" No, my Brethren! He redeemed His Mother by His Precious Blood as He redeemed us, with this very great difference: that He redeemed us by delivering us from Sin and from the Eternal Death which it entailed; He redeemed His Mother by meriting for her by anticipation the singular privilege of preservation from Original Sin. So does the Catholic Church teach, and so do we believe.

We look up to Heaven, marveling at this wonder of God's creation; and trying to imagine what God Himself must be when this, His creature, is found so fair. Her image falls to earth an image of beauty and holiness, that speaks eloquently of the power of God's grace, and under its shadow we

walk, and they who need it are healed. And in the sight of angels, fallen and unfallen, we are disposed to think better things of our humanity, which the Son of God espoused when he had perfected it in the person of His Immaculate Mother!

The Maternity of the Blessed Virgin

"He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His Name."—Luke I–49.

IT is quite surprising, almost, indeed, a scandal to men, the quiet way in which God performs some of His most marvelous works. With a Divine scorn of ostentation and pride, and all human formality, His great omnipotence evokes creation from nothing, and fashions existing things as it wills with a word, very often without even the medium of a word, but only with a wish.

Simplicity is the soul of God's creation. And as God is simple in the way He chooses to work, so too is He simple in the instruments He employs. It is quite true that He never selects for a work, but what He has already well adapted for it by His wonder-working graces; but men cannot see the mighty processes of justification and sanctification, wherewith He fits the humblest souls for the highest missions, and so when God, passing by the proud and mighty ones of the world, stoops into the very lowest depths, and studies, as it seems, to select what is humble and obscure, the world is offended, and because it cannot see with God's eyes, it refuses to submit to God's dispensations.

In nothing is this more true than of the way in which God worked out the greatest mystery of His Creation—the mystery of His own Divine Son

"figure of His substance, and splendor of His glory," true God of true God, Light of Light, hidden, concealed, annihilated, we might almost say, in the form of one of His own creatures.

A quiet chamber in the humblest house of the humblest village of a conquered nation, was the scene of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the humblest maiden in the humblest village was, almost before she knew it, the Mother of the Most High.

In the silence of noon-day, Mary is kneeling at her orisons, unconscious of her own existence, thinking only of God. A figure of light stands beside her; speaks to her in language she has never heard before, language to her quite unintelligible, sounding to her deep humility like words of mockery, for she is self-annihilated, and swallowed up in the great abyss of her love for God. "Hail, full of Grace!" sounds startling to a mind just filled with the ideas of how poor and weak and lowly she was before God! "The Lord is with Thee"; she had been thinking of Him as of one very far away, as of one, perhaps, that had never since the moment of her birth cast a thought or a look upon her, and she was quite content to worship, and to love Him, unseen of Him and unnoticed. "Blessed art thou amongst women?"!!! She had been thinking, who was the happy maiden that was selected by the Most High to be the Mother of His Son; thinking how she would honor her, but not envy her, never dreaming that from eternity she had been selected by the Most Holy Trinity for the high honor, and that to fit her for the high position the Spirit of God had been with

her from the first instant of her conception, had been personally united to her, had kept at a distance from her the powers of sin and darkness, had averted from her everything that could mar the exquisite beauty of her soul, had been daily infusing new graces, had been daily evolving from her soul fresh loveliness, had been daily flinging around her heavenly radiances, whilst all the time He let her rest in the deep abysses of humility, more than Saint or Angel, yet all unconscious of her sanctity. "Blessed amongst women?" Blessed amongst all God's creatures He might well have said, for the purity of that young Virgin outrivaled the purity of Heaven's brightest angel, and compared with her love for God, the loves of the Seraphim was cold. "Who, having heard was troubled at his saying, and thought within herself what manner of salutation this should be."

And the Angel went on to say how God had determined to work out His mighty design. She might have understood His words, or she might not have understood them. But she had no will of her own, her will was the Will of God, and so, she spoke her fiat: "Be it done unto me according to thy word," and the mightiest mystery of God's great love, the mystery that was a scandal to Lucifer and his fellows, the mystery whose depths eternity will not reveal, the mystery that will hold us speechless for ever before the throne of God, was accomplished. The figure of light disappeared, the little chamber assumed its wonted appearance; there remained only the child-mother, bathed in tears, but the God of the Universe was in her bosom.

To comprehend the greatness of the dignity to which Mary was thus raised, it would be necessary to measure the greatness of God Himself. It was the closest union that could subsist between the Uncreated and a creature, and the very fact of this union, independently of the preparation that must have been made for it, raises Mary above all other creatures, to a level, infinitely inferior to God, but unapproachable to men and angels.

For if to be close to God is to partake of His sanctity, what must not the holiness of Mary be, who was united to God in the closest bonds of union, who gave Him that body that was to be torn and mangled for the sins of the world, who held Him in her arms and nursed Him in His infancy, who followed Him step by step in the weary journey of His life, who rejoiced in His joys, and sympathized with a Mother's sympathy in His sufferings, who walked in His blood-stained footsteps up the great steep hill of Calvary, who stood fainting and weak in her mighty sorrow under the Cross, when the light had died out of Creation, and she was stared at by the blackness of despair, who held the dead body of Jesus in her arms, and buried all His hopes with Him in the sepulcher, who caught the first glance of his beatified countenance when He arose from the tomb, and the last accents of His blessing when He ascended into Heaven, who died out of the very excess of her desire to be reunited with her Son in Heaven, who for all eternity can never lose the privilege of Divine maternity, whose union with God shall never cease, but only be strengthened and cemented by the great eternal years, to whom,

following the example of her Divine Son the eyes of Catholics shall ever turn with reverent admiration and heartfelt pride, that God should have so honored our nature, and with a childlike confidence that springs from the assurance that, if Jesus be our brother, we, like Jesus, have filial claims on Mary.

Though it is possible to God to form a creature more perfect than His Mother Mary, for with all her great privileges she was still but a creature, and finite, and the power of God is infinite, still it would be in a certain sense impossible for God to raise her to a higher dignity.

The attributes of God are infinite; they are, therefore, incommunicable. A creature is absolutely incapable of possessing them; be that creature ever so high and holy and exalted, it must for ever remain a creature, and, therefore, it must be for ever infinitely inferior to God. Therefore, it is that between God and the Blessed Virgin there is an infinity that can never be spanned. Her holiness and wisdom and purity, compared with the holiness and wisdom and purity of God, are no more than a day compared to eternity, or a sand in the hour-glass to the mighty worlds of this universe.

But whilst freely admitting this, we also teach that we cannot by any possibility conceive how God can exalt a creature more than He exalted Mary by making her His Mother. She occupies a sphere peculiarly her own. Her majesty and dignity do not even approach the majesty and dignity of God: but neither are they approached or approachable by any other creature.

Therefore, it is that the saints of the Church have not hesitated to declare that the dignity of Mary is infinite in its kind. St. Bernardine says: "That the state to which God exalted Mary, in making her His Mother, was the highest state that could be conferred on a pure creature: so that He could not have exalted her more." And St. Albert the Great declares, "that in bestowing on Mary the maternity of God, God gave her the highest gift of which a pure creature is capable." Of course in saying this, the Saints do not pretend to limit the infinite power of God, an idea abhorrent to every Catholic mind; they only declare the incapacity of creatures to receive a greater privilege than this of Mary's Divine maternity. Such is Catholic truth, holding, as it always does, the golden mean between the heresies. With all the Church's devotion to Mary, she dare not, cannot, trench upon the glory of God; neither will she, heresy scream itself hoarse, abate by even one degree the dignity of that Virgin whom it is our pride to honor.

Though it would sound a strange, rather startling, doctrine to Protestant ears that, in very truth, our reverence and love for the Blessed Virgin Mary arise simply from the reverence and love we have for God Himself, yet, if we analyze our devotion to Mary, its origin and its nature, we shall find that this is the case.

The Catholic idea of God is not the idea of One who lives somewhere away in space, vague and shadowy, who takes little or no interest in His creatures, to whom therefore, no corresponding interest is due from His creatures, but it is the

idea of One, "in whom we live and move and are," who mingles with us in our daily life, who is deeply interested in our welfare; for whom, therefore, we entertain a deep and personal love, blended with holy awe and filial reverence. This being so, nothing that has the slightest connection with God can be to us uninteresting. Heaven is only Heaven to us, because the smile of God is there; Hell is only Hell because the frown of God for ever rests upon it, and its fires have been enkindled by His anger. Wherever the presence of God is, we view that place as consecrated ground; whatever the hand of God has touched is to us forevermore holy.

Herein is found a key for those Catholic doctrines that are so enigmatical to Protestants, reverence for the relics of God's holy ones, reverence for pictures of Christ and His Saints, reverence for the Saints themselves. It is all our reverence for God, reflected upon these His creatures, and reflected from these His creatures back again upon God.

Therefore, it is that we do not scruple to honor the Saints; therefore, it is that we honor the Mother whom God Himself so honored. If Mary had not been chosen to be Mother of God, she might have grown up like any other Jewish maiden, and Catholics would honor her as they honor other holy women.

But she is the Mother of God, and therefore, we pay her an honor proportionate to her dignity. We cannot make any difference between Mary and the Mother of God. We cannot regard the Blessed Virgin abstracting altogether from this her high-

est prerogative. It is her crown, her glory; she cannot lose it, and certainly it is not Catholics that will ever try to rob her of it. It is true that after almost nineteen hundred years' experience, after repeated proofs of Mary's more than maternal sympathy for us, knowing as we do the care she takes of her clients, and the innumerable graces she obtains for them by her intercession with her Son, it is quite true, that our love for Mary has in it something personal, that we are fond of regarding her as our Mother as well as the Mother of God; but even this filial reverence on our part is traceable to her privilege of Divine Maternity, for it is by reason of that same privilege that she can plead for us so powerfully and efficaciously with her Son. Like Esther, Mary has been raised to a very high dignity; like Esther, she has used all her influence in her high position on behalf of her people. God forbid that her people should ever forget her.

Therefore, it is that the Church of God has always regarded with reverence and affection this realization of an ideal that the omniscience of God alone could conceive, and the omnipotence of God alone could create. Therefore, it is that devotion to Jesus Christ is invariably followed by devotion to His Immaculate Mother. Therefore, it is that the Saints of God have not hesitated to say that the measure of our devotion to the Blessed Virgin is also the measure of our sanctity. We cannot separate the Son from the Mother. And I would give very little indeed for the Christianity of the man, who, looking upon a picture of the Madonna

and Child, could realize to himself the fact that that Infant is God, and yet gaze with cold indifference on the face of the Mother who holds Him.

It is a lamentable, to us very painful, fact that the only known type of men professing to be Christians that can be found to do so is the English Protestant. Proud and haughty men, even nations, whose prosperity made the sweet yoke of Christ feel galling, have now and again fallen away from that Church which is the only guide of men to Heaven; but never have they forgotten to take with them in their exile, the memory of the Infant of God and His Immaculate Mother.

There is not a house in Russia to-day that has not its picture of the Immaculate Mother. Even the Bedouins of the Arabian deserts will save your life, and restore your purse, if you only ask them in the name of Miriam. It was only a few days ago that I read in Mr. Kingslake's "History of the Crimean War," that the Russian soldiers struck down in the battles of the Alma and Balaclava, begged quarter for the sake of Mary, thinking, as Mr. Kingslake observes, "that however Christian sects may differ from one another, the name of Mary at least would be dear to all."

Even Rationalists fully admit the beauty of her who is the peculiar creation of Christianity, and her powerful influence to restrain men from evil, and to help them in the path of perfection. "The world," as says Mr. Lecky, "is governed by its ideals; and seldom or never has there been one which has exercised a more profound, and on the whole, a more salutary influence than the Concep-

tion of the Virgin. All that was best in Europe clustered around it, and it is the origin of many of the purest elements of our civilization."

It was reserved for the chivalry of Protestantism to rob Christianity of this its highest, finest ideal; it was reserved for cold, prosaic Protestantism, that tries to measure God by syllogisms, ignorant that its every syllogism is a sophism, to take from the world her that is the world's life and sweetness and hope. And in the Protestantism of the present day we trace the fulfillment of this great truth, that they who begin by declining to honor the Mother, are sure to end by blaspheming the Son.

The undying instincts of Christianity to honor the Mother of Christ, had been smothered remorselessly for three hundred years. To-day it is beginning to assert itself. From the walls of Protestant Churches that have stared blankly on the people for three centuries the mild face of the Madonna is again beaming. It has lost nothing of its kindness during its long banishment. In this fact is visible a gleam of hope for the future. Indeed, if those poor Ritualists would only give up burlesquing the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and making a mockery of the Sacraments, I would have hopes that their devotion to Our Lady, cold and weak though it be, would bring them back eventually to the bosom of the Church. For this is a truth which I hold with all the certainty of faith, that never yet did the Mother of God leave a single petition, however feeble, unanswered, or a single favor unrequited.

The Dolours of Mary

"To what shall I compare thee? or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? to what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O Virgin daughter of Sion? for great as the sea is thy destruction; who shall heal thee?" —Jer. 11–13.

We are invited to-day by the Church to commemorate the sorrows of our Blessed Mother Mary, and to learn from them the very stern, and at the same time, very consoling, truths which they teach. It is one of the many things in God's dealing with us, that seems so very mysterious, that He should have made suffering a condition of Sanctity, and that our novitiate on earth in preparation for our profession in Heaven should be sadly embittered either by chastisements which He sends immediately from Himself, or by sorrows we ourselves induce, or by troubles which men, as instruments in the hands of His Providence, inflict upon us.

It is a strange truth, not the less true because it is strange, that to wish to be the friend or child of God is to wish to suffer. We cannot get near Him without being afflicted, and the nearer we approach the more intense do the sufferings become. God cannot lay His hand upon us without pressing very heavily, and when we turn our faces away from the world, and look up to Him, He will very soon wet them with our tears.

It is His way of dealing with His saints; the

reasons of it are hidden away from our sight in the depths of His wisdom; we know and can trace them all to the greatness of His love; we know that His punishing us does not argue in Him want of love for us; nay, He Himself has told us that "whom He loves He chastises"; and so we are quite content to take cognizance of the fact, without scrutinizing it or God's motives too closely.

This, then, may be stated as a general law, that as our Divine Lord was a man of suffering; that as sorrow was the one characteristic of His life on earth, containing and concealing every other feature, so every other creature that has ever come nigh unto Him has been stamped into the likeness of His sorrow, and that no creature shall ever come nigh unto Him unless it be scarred with the scars of suffering, and thus marked with the sign of the Lamb.

He came upon earth, and His coming was the signal for the death of many thousands, Holy Innocents, that had never seen Him, nor known Him, but had the good fortune to be born about the same time, and thus to be ushered through short, quick suffering into an eternity of happiness, unseen by human eyes, unheard of by human ears, undreamt by the human heart. Again, nearly all of His Apostles died violent deaths, Peter and his brother on a cross, Paul by the sword, James under showers of stones, Bartholomew under the flaying knife; John did not die violently, but he had suffered all the tortures of martyrdom in the boiling cauldron, and on the island of Patmos. And if we could see the inner lives of those saints we would find that their sufferings were not par-

tial and instantaneous, but that a great dark cloud of sorrow overhung their whole lives, and that it was only by passing through it that they emerged into the inaccessible light of Heaven.

It is not surprising then, that as our Blessed Mother was most highly favored of God, so, too, she, of all creatures, should be most deeply afflicted by Him. That as she was always nighest unto Jesus, as she, too, had the largest share in His sufferings, her whole life being wound up in His, it necessarily followed, that everything that touched Him, touched her also, His thoughts were her thoughts, His wish was her will, never was she dissociated from Him, and, therefore, she had more than a mother's share in all His sorrows.

She was with Him in the stable, and if His great infinite mind was awake in the form of the slumbering Child, and keenly alive in all its helplessness to the misery with which it was surrounded, was not the Mother's heart, too, sensitive of the sufferings of her Infant, and was not she, as a creature, still more deeply humbled and confounded that on the first night of His sojourn upon earth, she, so exalted, so richly endowed, to whom such mighty things had been done, had no better place to lay the Creator of the Universe. And from that hour, indeed, long before it, until the hour which saw her reunited with her Son in Heaven, her life was one long sorrow.

Every instant came to her laden with anguish and bitterness. She knew the mission upon which her Divine Son had come upon earth. It was revealed in part to her by the Angel, when he said that the name of the Child should be Jesus. It

was revealed to her fully by Simeon when he told her that "the child was raised for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel, and that her own soul a sword should pierce that out of many hearts thoughts might be revealed." Now it was the knowledge of the sufferings of Jesus, combined with her exquisite sensitiveness to suffering, and to His sufferings most of all, that constituted all her dolours.

Ignorance is often the greatest preservative of happiness, we cannot suffer from that of which we know nothing; from how many miseries does not God deliver us by shutting out the future from our view? If it were revealed to us in our young years, that we should have to pass through all the difficulties and stern trials, and many martyrdoms of manhood; if to us in the vigor of life, all the sorrows of old age were shown so as to be perfectly understood and felt—all its imbecility and helplessness and dotage, its restlessness, its querulousness, and how we should be a burden to others, and how the young would laugh at the follies of our second childhood, and our friends would say, "Oh! Death would be a relief to him," when they really mean "Death would be a great relief to themselves," how wretched would not our lives be. But God, pitying our weakness, makes the future dark to us, and so the sorrows of life come to us in installments, one by one, and we easily glide over them by His assistance, and go our ways cheerfully, not seeing the many others that are bearing down on us, thick and fast, from the great hands of His Providence.

But He did not deal so with our Blessed Mother.

All the sorrows of her life were concentrated into each instant of it. Every recollection was laden with sorrow. And because she was gifted by God with a terrible prevision of Calvary, every present act, and every anticipation of the future was the source of intense suffering. Calvary was for ever before her eyes, and though it is true that God alone can measure the sufferings of Our Divine Lord during His Passion, we know, that for her own greater glory in Heaven, He intensified her sufferings upon earth by holding for ever before her the vision of the cross, and revealing to her at the same time the sufferings of her Divine Son in their terrible reality.

He threw around the Cross a supernatural light, that showed in their dread significance the horrors of the sufferings of an Infinite Being; He gave her to understand, so far as her limited comprehension would allow, what is meant by the death of a God; revealed to her with terrible distinctness that the Divinity of her Son, so far from lessening the greatness of His sufferings, was the cause of their infinite significance and their infinite intensity, and this picture with all its horrors standing out in bold relief He kept before her eyes during her whole life—the anticipation of Calvary for the thirty-three years of the life of Jesus was worse than Calvary in His Mother's heart. Calvary depicted in its minutest detail was for ever before her eyes. The presence of her Divine Son kept it there. Every look at Him was a reminder of it. Every look of His mild majestic face summoned the ever-present vision of that same face haggard, blood-stained, pale, as it was destined to

be on Calvary. Every sound of His voice, speaking from the depths of His great loving Heart, was to the Mother ever a reminder of the terrible cry of anguish which Jesus would utter when utterly crushed beneath the weight of His Father's vengeance, and unable to find even in His Divinity a support.

In very truth it may be said that Mary walked all her life in the shadow of Calvary. It deepened all her many minor sorrows, it made her joys sufferings; it darkened all her life; as a mother she mourned the cruel death of her Son; she was horror stricken at the view of the indignities to which her Creator would be subjected; as the fellow-creature and sister of men she deplored the blindness that would not recognize the proofs of her Son's Divinity, and the obduracy that repaid the benevolence of her Son with a crime of the blackest ingratitude.

And all this time with every succeeding vision, her love for Jesus was increasing, the nearer they drew to Calvary the dearer was Jesus to His Mother, the nearer the time of parting approached, the more did Mary feel that she could not bear to be separated from her Son, and it was her sorrow, crown of sorrow, that her habitual vision of her Son's sufferings did not dull the anguish of their reality, but increased her sensibility by increasing her love.

Hence there is no exaggeration in the assertion of the Saints that Mary suffered more than all the martyrs that have ever bled for Christ. For great though the sufferings of the martyrs were, they will not bear comparison with hers, inasmuch as

her sufferings were proportioned to her greatness, and as the dignity of Mother of God was greater than the united dignities of all saints and angels, so were her sorrows greater than all their united sorrows.

Again, that which is to all the martyrs of Christ the greatest consolation under their trials, was to Mary the very source of all her suffering. We know that however cruelly the martyrs were treated, whatever torments they had to endure, however human physical strength yielded under the inhuman barbarity of their tormentors, they could always afford to smile at their tormentors, for there was always with them a presence that soothed their sufferings, that tempered the heat of the fires, and made the hard rack easy, and changed all their sufferings into joy, the presence of their Divine Master, and the consciousness that it was for Him they suffered, that in their suffering they were made somewhat like unto Him.

But it was this very presence of her Divine Son that was the chief cause of Mary's sorrows. It was for Him she suffered. The sight of Him, the bare fancy of whose presence would mitigate, and altogether annihilate, the sufferings of the martyrs, was her most cruel torture. And then she had no assistance from Him. The saints of the Church were unanimous in declaring that Mary's sufferings were to purely human strength unendurable. That she could not have lived under them did not God assist her. St. Anselm says, "Whatever cruelty was inflicted on the martyrs was light, or rather it was nothing compared to the cruelty of Mary's passion." St. Bernardine

of Siena says, "that so great was the sorrow of the Blessed Virgin, that if it was subdivided and parceled out among all creatures capable of suffering, they would perish instantly." And it was revealed to St. Bridget that if Our Lord had not miraculously supported His Mother, it would not have been possible for her to live through her martyrdom. But the support He gave her was devoid of consolation. He strengthened her that she might suffer the more. He endowed her with a supernatural life, and yet kept within her what would be the cause of instantaneous death if even for a moment He withdrew His extraordinary conserving power.

Hers was a living death, but it was to be her probation for the deathless life she enjoys in Heaven. She suffered that she might be crowned. Her sorrows were proportioned to her holiness and dignity, and her holiness and dignity are measured by her sorrow.

She is the Woman clothed with the sun, because she was the Woman that stood in the thickest folds of the blackness that enveloped her Son on Calvary. She is nearest to her Divine Son in Heaven because she was nearest to Him in all His sufferings upon earth. "Man of Sorrows" Isaias called Him; "Mother of Sorrows" the Church calls her. And it is under that aspect the Church asks to-day for our devotion.

And as to every Catholic mind, Calvary will be ever dearer than Tabor, dearer than Heaven itself, so too will Mary under the aspect of "Mother of Sorrows" be dearer than Mary even in the joy of her Assumption. Let the angels of Heaven keep

to themselves, if they will, the glorified humanity of Jesus, with the five great wounds shining like suns, and the Woman by His side with the stars around her head, and the moon beneath her feet, but leave to us the bleak hillside of Calvary, with the crucified humanity of Jesus, and the five wounds streaming with the Blood that saved us, and the Mother beneath seemingly so calm, and silent and patient, but seen by the Eternal Father to be brokenhearted in her childlessness, with a grief, to which even tears would be a mockery. For here have we not the Vision of God more beautiful than even Heaven can reveal it; and here we have Mary, surpassing in her Crucifixion the glory of her Conception, her Nativity, her Annunciation, her Assumption. And what favor to-day shall we ask from God but this, to send us what afflictions He pleases, that crushed by the strength of His great love, we may yearn in the depths of our sorrow to prove the strength that His love imparts, when we know, that in our sorrow we have the companionship of Jesus and Mary.

The Assumption of Our Lady

"Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting place, Thou and the Ark which Thou hast sanctified."—Ps. cxxxi.

TWELVE years of silent waiting, fifteen years of exile from Jesus, fifteen years of yearnings and heart sickness, such as they say mothers only know, and Mary is on her death-bed, and about to be re-united with her Son. Fifteen years she spent without Him before the great morning of the Annunciation, and fifteen years has spent without Him, since the day when she strained her eyes to catch one last glimpse of His beatified countenance, as the cloud of Olivet enveloped Him and hid Him away from her sight.

Mary's life was one long dolour; a life of active suffering while Jesus was with her; for the prophecy of Simeon was for ever ringing in her ears, and Calvary was every moment drawing nearer; its dark shadow with the three crosses for ever loomed over the quiet home of Nazareth. A life of passive suffering, now that the great tragedy was finished; but a passive suffering more keen, more desolating, more agonizing, for the light of her life had gone out.

The anticipations of the sufferings of Jesus, the awful realization of those anticipations on Calvary, sadly embittered the life of Mary; but then Jesus was with her, and His presence sweetened all the sorrows; during the last fifteen years there

was no active pain, no terrible real sorrows, such as had racked her soul during the life of Jesus on earth; but now Jesus is gone it is night; the Sun has been taken from her universe; life is a blank; all the sorrow of life is concentrated here; she has settled down into that quiet, silent, patient grief that sees no hope but in the grave. I do believe that Mary alone of all creatures could understand that saying of St. Thomas à Kempis: "To be without Jesus is a grievous hell, to be with Jesus a sweet paradise."

However, her sorrows are now about to end. She is on her death-bed. The Apostles have been summoned by some spiritual telegraphy to Jerusalem—some sort of shuddering instinct that pervaded the Church that she who was its soul, its life, since Jesus died, was now about to rejoin Jesus in Heaven.

A quiet chamber, simple in its appointments as was the little chamber of Nazareth. An old man stands at the foot of the little bed whereon reposes the dying Queen; and as he catches a last glance of the dying eyes, there are tears upon his cheeks, for there come to him reminiscences of the eyes of Jesus, and of that awful glance that pierced his own soul on that night of horrors in Pilate's hall. A man, in the prime of life, stands with an expression on his features something like to that which they wore fifteen years ago on Calvary; he lost a brother in Jesus then; he is losing a mother in Mary now: it is John, alone thought worthy by Jesus to be the adopted virginal son and protector of the Virgin of Virgins; near the head of the dying Queen there is pillowed another head—pil-

lowed as it was fifteen years ago, on the blood-stained, nail-pierced feet of Jesus as he hung upon the Cross. It is the woman that stole into the dining room of Simon the Pharisee, and washed with her tears, and dried with her hair, the feet of Him who sat there. She is whispering a message to the Mother for the Son—an assurance that Jesus does not need—that Magdalen has been loyal to Him.

Around the room are scattered groups of mild, earnest men, waiting with a kind of pious curiosity not unmixed with sorrow, to see what kind of death the Mother of their Master will die. They were not on Calvary, "the shepherd was struck, and the sheep were dispersed," but they heard from Magdalen and John of the burning words which Jesus spoke, and they saw from afar the horrors amid which the great tragedy was consummated; they expect some other heavenly demonstration at the death of the Mother; perhaps they expect to catch another glimpse of Jesus when He comes to take His Mother to Heaven.

But what is Mary thinking of all this time? They say that at the hour of death the mind is empowered to cast one great retrospective glance over its life, and that glance comprehends every thought, every word, every action, in their minutest details.

If it be so, what a strange panorama was that which passed before the eyes of Mary. The quiet days in the temple, the little room of Nazareth lighted up by the presence of an angel, the few words that were spoken, and the mighty ineffable mystery that was accomplished that evening on

the hills of Judea, when Elizabeth came to meet her, and saluted her as the Mother of God, and she herself in the exuberance of her gratitude, broke out under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, into the sublime strains of the Magnificat; the horror that filled her soul when Simeon revealed to her at what a terrible cost she had become the Mother of Him that was to be crucified for His people, the desolation and the sorrow of the three days that she was separated from Jesus; every painful circumstance connected with the flight to Egypt—the hurried preparation, the cries of the children, the wailing of the mothers, the silent, weary journey on the desert, the strange Egyptian faces in Heliopolis; that day in Cana, when to please her, Jesus anticipated His time and broke through the eternal decree; the three years' missionary life, and the crowning sorrow on Calvary.

Yes! Jesus dying in pain, and His Mother dying in peace. Jesus dying friendless, forsaken; and Mary dying surrounded by the princes of the Church; the dying eyes of Jesus see only the faces of an infuriated mob, distorted with passion and eloquent of the hate they bear him; the dying eyes of the Mother see tender, reverent faces, wet with the tears that show how they loved her; the ears of the dying Jesus hear only the execrations of the multitude, and "Vah! Vah! come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Thee"; the ears of the dying Mother are open to sounds of heavenly rejoicing, and she learns that it is a gala day in Heaven, and that all the rejoicings are for her; over the cross of Jesus, the terrible face of the Father is bending in His anger, until the dying

Son is forced to expostulate, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Over the couch of the Mother is bending the most Holy Trinity, the Father whose omnipotence created her, the Spirit, whose love espoused her, the Son, her own Divine Son—she thinks she remembers those features—but it occurs to her that in all this there must be something wrong; that it scarcely befits the Mother to die as a Queen, and the Son to die as a criminal; the Creature to die in peace, and the Creator to die writhing in agony. But then Jesus will have it so; the life of His Mother has been one long martyrdom on His account. Her end at least shall be in peace.

No earthly thought mars her anticipated vision of Heaven, no earthly affection makes her parting from earth feel bitter; she has been in the world, but she has not been of the world; she has walked over the earth without touching it; human affections she has had, but they have been centered in God; her every thought has been of God; her every wish has been to please God; her every desire has been a desire of closer union with God. Her last thoughts, perhaps, linger over Nazareth and Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Calvary, all places hallowed by the presence of Jesus, but if the presence of God, with all His attributes shrouded in human flesh, could lend a light to those places, and make the memory even of gloomy Calvary so dear, what must not Heaven be, where the same God reveals Himself in all the plenitude of His perfections.

No memories of sins long-buried, sins of youth, sins of riper years, rise up around her bed like accusing angels. Her life has been sinless; there

is not one stain of earth upon her soul; there is not one word, or thought or action of her life of which she could repent. Her will has ever been in perfect conformity with the Will of God; patiently and thankfully she has always submitted to His dispensations, even when He decreed to plunge her in seas of Sorrow in which His omnipotence alone could have sustained her, and out of which His omnipotence alone could have rescued her. Therefore, for her judgment had no terrors; for her salvation is no uncertainty.

Judgment? She was judged long years ago, years even before her birth, when the Most Holy Trinity destined her to be the Mother of the Son, and to fit her for that high privilege, declared that she should be exempt from the taint upon our race, that Sin and Hell should have no dominion over her, and commissioned the Holy Spirit to be her custodian, to preserve this temple of the Lord undefiled, to keep this Ark of the Covenant ever sanctified. Faithfully did the Spirit discharge that commission; and, therefore, there is no judgment of Mary on her death-bed. For the Father does not judge His own decrees, neither does the Father judge the works of the Spirit.

With no tie upon earth, with her only hope in Heaven; with no remorse for time, with no fears for eternity, dying out of pure love for God, assuredly the death of Mary is a happy one. Here upon earth are tears of sorrow, the only really eloquent testimony of worth appreciated, and Heaven is wild with joy at the prospect of her coming.

Amid songs of heavenly mirth and pæans of

heavenly triumph, Jesus now unweaves with tender, reverent hands the bands that are binding His Mother to earth. Once was He helpless in her arms, now is she helpless in His, and now does He repay with the interest which God alone can give, all the tenderness, and reverence and love, that were lavished upon Him in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, and when He lay, cold and stiff and lifeless in His Mother's lap on Calvary.

Slowly and with gentle respect does He free the soul from its prison, and there—Peter, John and Magdalen, guard with jealous eyes this treasure, it has enshrined the noblest soul that ever came from My Father's hands; watch it with reverent care; in three days again We shall require it to grace the mansions of My Father's House for eternity, and "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come; for the winter is past and gone; come from Libanus my spouse, come from Libanus come and thou shalt be crowned," and Jesus takes the soul of His Mother to Heaven, and the Apostles are weeping around the dead body of their Queen.

Before we follow the soul of our Mother to Heaven, let us make one reflection, while we stand in her dead sacred presence. I have spoken of her death as peaceful; but then it was Death. The passage of her soul to Heaven was unaccompanied by any of the horrors in which death usually reveals itself. But still it was Death. And that solemn fact alone suggests a whole world of thoughts. For when I look upon the cold, mute, impassive features of the Mother of God, when I view that sacred body that gave to God the flesh

wherewith He saved the world, lifeless, helpless, inanimate, as is the body of the meanest sinner upon earth, and when I think of that other dead, sacred body on Calvary, the eyes of the all-seeing God blind, the hands of the all-powerful God helpless, Jesus dead, Mary dead, I begin to think that the justice of God is that one of His attributes of which you and I have the very faintest idea. Oh! if that one primal sin, the apple-bite in Paradise, entailed this dreadful penalty upon our race, and if the justice of God is so inexorable, that it will not remit the punishment even for Mary, even for Jesus, what will be the dealings of that same justice with us whose sins are—

> "Countless in their hideous sum,
> God-mocking in God's open Sight,
> And strong to strike His knowledge dumb."

Of the glory of the Mother of God in Heaven it is difficult to form even an idea; yet by comparison we may learn it by approximation. If "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, if it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for those who love him," what must not Heaven be to Her whose love for God surpassed in intensity the loves of all men and angels. If the measure of our merit upon earth shall be the measure of our happiness in Heaven, who shall presume to set bounds to the happiness of Her, whose least action was meritorious, for it was directed to the greater glory of God? If the happiness of Heaven is proportioned to the plenitude wherewith the Beatific Vision is revealed, what must not the happiness of Mary be, for as-

suredly God will hide very little of His perfections from His Mother? If the purity of our lives here below will give us a clearer vision of God's infinite attributes in Heaven, if the sanctity of our own Souls will be the medium through which we shall view God for ever, how vivid must not Mary's perception of God be—Mary—whose soul is whiter than the faces of the Seraphs?

Other saints have had characteristic virtues. Mary is the personification of every virtue. Her faith, which was scarcely less than Vision, was not greater than her Hope, which was absolute certainty, while her Charity for God was the moving principle of her life, and the proximate cause of her death. Her obedience was perfect, for her will was identified with the will of God; her patience under suffering was superhuman; her poverty was perfect—only think of the stable, and her dependence upon John during the later years of her life. In a word, Mary spoke her vows in the Temple. They were the first notes of a life-hymn, whose music sounded strangely pleasing in the ears of God; it drew Him down from Heaven; it will hold Him spell-bound for eternity, and in saying all this I am but paraphrasing the words of Gabriel, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee."

They say that it was the foreknowledge of the dignity to which God would raise our nature by assuming it in the Incarnation that so scandalized Lucifer and his fellows that they rebelled and were lost. I think that if he could see Mary to-day near the same Sacred Humanity of Jesus in Heaven his angelic pride would be doubly offended. Angelic

natures in Heaven; lost Angelic natures in Hell; human nature upon Earth; but human nature, too, most highly honored in Heaven. Angelic natures confirmed in glory in Heaven; Angelic natures hopelessly lost in Hell. Men struggling between both on earth.

But two human hands ever uplifted before the face of God in Heaven, and a face upturned to Him, on which He cannot look without emotion. Neither can we, my beloved, look upon it without hope. If I had only a certainty that those hands were ever uplifted for me in Heaven, or that the voice of the Mother ever pleaded for me with her Son, I should not envy the angels their confirmed glory, or the security of their bliss. Reign on! great Queen! draw thy bright mantle around thee! fix the star-diadem on thy head! Royalty, even though it be the Royalty of Heaven, shall be to thee no sinecure! Thou hast us and a whole world yet to save!

SERMONS ON SAINTS

The Conversion of St. Augustine[1]

I

To those who will not, or cannot, understand, the supernatural work of the Church of God, there appears to be a dull uniformity in the lives of our Catholic Saints, which to them is inexpressibly repulsive. To them the saying of St. Paul "that there is but one spirit, but different operations of the same spirit," is unintelligible. Nor can they bring themselves to believe that the sanctification of a soul is a work of infinite design, and that that design varies in beauty and originality according to the nature of the soul itself, or the mission it is sent to accomplish amongst men. Here the Spirit breathes, and behold a zeal that sets a continent on fire—on the Soul the Spirit descends, and behold a charity that searches out and consumes all grosser things like fire, and like a flame, points steadily upward—and here, behold again the white vestal lamp of purity, lighted and kept alive by the same Divine breath.

In this saint, the moral and spiritual elements are so expanded and developed, that the operation of the intellect appears to be suspended, and here again you pause in unconscious suspense to decide whether the moral and spiritual beauty or the in-

[1] Preached at the Augustine Church, Cork, 1887.

tellectual grandeur reflects more glory on the Giver of both.

To this latter class most certainly belongs the great Saint, whose name is so familiar to those who worship within these walls—a saint whose love for God lifted him almost to the level of that beloved disciple who saw the city of God in the Heavens, as Augustine saw the City of God upon earth—a Saint who to-day, after fourteen centuries which have blotted out the names of all his contemporaries except those who have shared his immortality through his writings, is teacher, prophet, and intellectual guide to leaders of thought throughout the universities of the world —aye, even to framers of laws and sovereigns of men, whose word makes or mars the happiness of nations.

And here, at least, no complaint can be made of that which the world calls monotonous and sluggish tameness, which we call the calm unbroken peace which is the reward of high sanctity, for the life of St. Augustine is marked by such striking events, and his great soul passed through such extremes of passion and doubt, that the pious soul can draw inspiration from his holiness, the philosopher or divine fresh wisdom from his learnning, and the student of humanity will feel fresh interest in the strugglings of a soul to disenthrall itself from the fierce promptings of passion, and the seductions of intellectual pride. For Augustine was a convert; from a sinner he became a Saint, from a doubter and denier he became a believer and a teacher; and it is to commemorate this marvelous and touching change, wrought in

such strange and simple ways by the omnipotence of grace, that we are met to-night.

And first we must distinctly understand that his conversion was twofold, yet simultaneous—a moral conversion and an intellectual enlightenment—perhaps the only example of it that you will find in the history of the Church, for be it known that the striking conversion of great intellects, such as those of which we are witnesses in a neighboring country, is generally interpreted as a recognition by the Holy Spirit of the holy lives and the noble striving after light which have marked the careers of these converts. They were then simply lifted from the twilights of the valleys to the full splendors that shine in the Holy Mountain, and the natural virtues which they practiced were elevated to the rank of Supernatural excellences by the Divine power of Faith. But with Augustine, there was not only intellectual blindness to be relieved, but moral depravity to be corrected, and his conversion is all the more glorious inasmuch as the scales fell from his eyes, and shackles of fleshly love from his limbs at the same moment, and his noble nature was lifted into the serene region of faith and purity by one and the same operation.

It is not at all difficult to understand how this young rhetorician, African by birth, Roman by education, drifted into those criminal excesses, which he afterwards so fittingly deplored.

A hot, ardent nature, into which the tropical sun had stricken its fires, lay absolutely at the mercy of those fierce passions which please and

pain, but whose torture far more than transcends the transient delights which they bring.

Religion, with its sweet, soothing influences was unknown to him. Those radiant visions that afterwards haunted him with their pure ethereal splendor until they lifted him from the slough of sin were yet far off.

At home the example of a Christian mother was more than overshadowed by the example of a Pagan father, who almost reveled in the iniquities of his child, and whose passion, blunted by age, seemed to be newly whetted in the contemplation of similar passions that daily evinced themselves in his boy. Then, too, sacramental grace was absent from his soul, for by a series of accidents, the Sacrament of Baptism, which he was about to receive in a dangerous illness, was deferred, and he grew to manhood with the great original stain infecting his whole character, and changing even his good impulses into criminal issues and results.

With such sad equipments, he was thrown into a world that just then was reaching its perfection of inquity, for the hosts of darkness were marshaling their forces for the last conflict with victorious Christianity. Young, ardent, impetuous, Augustine was thrown into the midst of the dissipation and vice of that city, which, whilst Rome was being gradually changed into a city of sanctity, borrowed its worst vices, and made itself the home of the lascivious worships, and flung open its temples to the deities whose names were pollution, and set itself in angry antagonism to that

religion of sacrifice and purity, that already had lifted its conquering standard on the seven hills of its ancient rival, Rome.

It is rather difficult for us to understand the excesses to which men yielded themselves freely in these Pagan cities. They were demoniac rather than human. A Christian preacher dare not speak of them in detail, nor can the imagination dwell on them without sin. We have some picture left us of the licentiousness and sensuality, the festivals of blood, and the orgies of unutterable lust that characterized ancient Rome. Yet Carthage was another and more wicked Rome. The civilization of the latter had penetrated to the conquered province, and under a warmer sun, had given birth to vice, which even to accomplished Rome was unknown.

A carnival of vice in the streets—vice deified in the temples—vice incarnated on the stage—poets consecrating their divine talent, and orators devoting their sacred gifts to the embellishment of vice—such was the moral condition of a city which in the just judgments of the Eternal is to-day but a name, whilst its great rival, with justice claims the proud title of Eternal.

Into Carthage thus seething in sin, young Augustine was plunged; and in a short time, as he himself pathetically tells us, he was ashamed, when he heard his companions boasting of flagitious action, that he was less guilty than they; and so, at the early age of nineteen, a victim of two deadly vices, ambition and sensuality, his father dead, his mother weeping and praying, young Augustine commenced to tread the wine-

press of the sorrow that is begotten of sin, not knowing that he had any higher destiny than to become famous in the schools or law courts—not knowing that there were higher and loftier delights than are to be found in the pursuits of sin.

And so he wasted the most blessed gift of God —the years of youth and the strength of budding manhood, in a little study and much pleasure—dreams of fame and desires that raged and could not be quenched—to rest in a carnal and sensual paradise, and not a thought of the immortal soul, nor of the God in whom yet he believed, nor of the eternity in which he was laying up for himself treasures of wrath against the day that was to come.

It was just at this time, too, that he embraced the Manichæan heresy—one of the most singular inventions of human folly that ever claimed the credence of men.

If one did not know the infinite capacity for folly that lies latent in the human mind, we would be surprised to hear that such a great intellect, like that of Augustine, not only embraced this folly, but became for nine years its most able and zealous professor. But the secret was that these Manichæan doctrines were very flattering to his pride, and very favorable to the indulgence of those passions that consumed him.

Their falsehood and sophistry afforded him ample ground for exhibiting all the logical power and rich eloquence of which he was even then a master. The severe doctrines of Christianity left no room for conceits and sophisms which he could build at pleasure around the loose and ill-defined

errors which now he professed, and he hated not only the austere religion, every syllable of whose doctrines and discipline upbraided and made him ashamed, but he disliked the simplicity of the Scriptures, nor would he believe that the wisdom of the Eternal was revealed in language that would not be tolerated in the Grammar school at Carthage. "He cried aloud for wisdom, and wisdom fled far from him; for he would not put his feet into her fetters, nor his neck into her chains."

But it must not be supposed for a moment that Augustine drifted helplessly along with the current of iniquity without a struggle. A great soul, like his, does not yield itself to such abasement without protest. The higher faculties of the soul not yet destroyed, declared against this animalism, and the great intellect was striving with all its might against the darkness which enveloped it.

I know nothing more pitiable than the spectacle of a fine soul struggling vainly against its lower nature, if it be not the spectacle of a lofty mind, striving vainly to break through its spiritual darkness, and emerge into the light.

To know what is right, and yet be unable to do it.

To hate what is wrong, and yet be unable to avoid it.

To lift oneself bravely out of the slime and then to fall back helplessly—to fight against overwhelming passion, and then to yield shamefully, and, after a moment of fierce delight, to tear and rend oneself with a remorse that is hopeless and a despair that is helpless—surely this is the saddest of fates. Yet it finds its parallel in the spec-

tacle of a soul, holding its hands for ever before its eyes to peer into the darkness and search its way into the light, yet evermore turning away despairingly to a gloom that is all the deeper because enlightened by sudden gleams of fitful splendor.

In each sense, such was now the condition of Augustine's soul. Love and light! love and light! Such was the Eternal cry of Augustine's life and heart. Love for an object so high and sublime that the intellect should never weary in contemplation of its transcendent excellence—love for an object so perfect that the conscience should never scruple its warmest attachment, love so strong that every fiber of the heart should cling to the loved object, so that Death itself could not break, nor time diminish, the strength of its affection. Love so vast that the soul should ever wander through its happy realms without exhaustion, and there find its happy rest and fruition—and behold in answer to this high demand there was only the love of a perishing creature, and the low levels of sin and death.

There was some ideal beauty for ever before him, beckoning to him, attracting him, almost maddening him with the impossibility of reaching it: and behold! when he stretched his hands towards it, it was a phantom, and he touched only the one void of wisdom, the riddle of Solomon, "sitting upon a stool at the door, and saying come and eat willingly the bread that is hidden, and drink of the sweet stolen water." And light, light to understand himself and the dread environments of nature! Who was he? What was this

awful mystery of life in which the unseen God had placed him? What was the secret of the grave? Who were those beings around him with the masks for ever on their faces, and the veils over their hearts? Fear and Good and Evil, Right and Wrong. Who hath stated their limits, who hath defined their natures? Would he ever see clearly? Would he ever know certainly? Would this restless intellect ever repose in the serene contemplation of truth so perfect that it admitted no shadow of doubt or denial?

Yet to all this impatient questioning came as answer only the last words of a dying Grecian philosophy, the devilry of imported Roman worship, the well coined phrases that slipped from the lips of sophists or poets.

And with all this hunger on his heart, this wild unrest in his intellect, Augustine went round from law court to lecture room, from temple to theater, and the young Carthaginians worshiped and envied him, and asked one another—"Were you present at the lecture of Augustine Aurelius today?" or "Did you hear the dispute between Augustine and Faustus?" "Why, he tore the thread-bare garments of the old Manichæan to pieces!" But he kept the veil drawn tightly over his heart. God alone saw its workings.

So it is with all of us. Well it is for us that the eye that searches us is the eye of a Father and a Friend. All the time, however, two powerful influences were at work to bring this erring soul into its true mission. That Divine Being, whose presence made cool and pleasant the flames that scorched the bodies of His martyrs, whose love, to

the eyes of enraptured virgins, made sweet and easy the absolute sacrifice they made, whose cross in after times was the sacred book whence doctors drew their inspirations, was watching and waiting for the Soul of him, who was destined to become a "vessel of election." For although Augustine did not as yet quite understand the full meaning and beauty of Christian truth, he had always cherished the most extraordinary reverence for its Divine Founder, and the name of Jesus Christ was to him a symbol of everything that was high and holy.

He declares in his Confessions that though he felt himself strongly influenced by the writings of Cicero, one thing particularly displeased him in the works of that great author, that he found not there the name of Christ; and "whatsoever wanted this name," he said, "however learned soever or polite or instructive it might be, did not perfectly take with me." And this sweet influence was insensibly drawing him away from his Pagan beliefs and practices, giving him new and larger views of that wisdom after which he thirsted, silently upbraiding him for his follies and excesses, for ever contrasting the grandeur of humility with the meanness of pride—the dignity of purity with the shame of unbridled concupiscence.

What a contrast between the simple majesty of Christ and the proud folly of philosophers—between His words weighty with solemn meaning, and their utterances, weak and inflated—His example so lofty and perfect, and their lives, so secretly degraded and imperfect.

And how that Divine figure haunted him, not with terror and fear, but with the same benign

influences that rained on the soul of Magdalen or St. John. Wherever he went that apparition was before him, chiding him, attracting him, making him angry with himself, and dissatisfied with the world; and he would make the most valiant efforts to overcome the temptations that were around him, and then sink back into despair again, for the time fixed in the Eternal decrees for his conversion had not yet come—the gold was yet to be more tried and purified by fire before it could receive the impress of its King.

And day by day—night after night, prayers were ascending before God's throne for him, prayers that wearied and did violence to Heaven by their strength and persistence.

There is something altogether supernatural in a mother's love. It is the strongest reminder we have of God's boundless mercy. It is so weak, yet so powerful: so patient and so persistent; it has such a superb contempt for the logic of facts, and the sequence of sin and punishment, it is so ready to turn vice into virtue, and to accept the faintest turning from sin as the promise of high perfection, it is so faithful, so perfect, so unselfish, so true, that next after a saint's love for God, it is the best thing our earth can show. And if ever this beautiful love existed in human soul, it surely was in hers, whose name is for ever inseparably united with that of St. Augustine—his sainted mother—Monica.

How she watched over him in his childhood and boyhood, how she strove by her example and teaching to destroy the evil effects of her husband's example on the child, how deeply she suffered as

the first reports of her son's perversity came to her ears, how fervently she prayed that his heart might be touched and renewed with penance—all this St. Augustine himself tells us, adding to the story the high appreciation he always had of his Mother's unselfish devotion.

And a certain remorse was added to the mother's prayers, for she remembered that she, too, had sinned by ambition, and, perhaps, had sacrificed the purity of her child to those ambitious longings of future fame which she had shared with him. If she had only known how Augustine would be tempted, if she could only have foreseen the dangers that are strewn in the path of the young, and the pitfalls that are dug for them at every footstep—well, it is useless to be regretting a past that cannot be recalled, and after all Heaven is merciful, and she has seen a certain vision in which she had been told that the mighty gulf between her and Augustine shall yet be bridged, and he shall yet stand side by side with her, and they shall kneel together, and their prayers shall mingle, and the merits of the Mighty sacrifice shall be shared between them, and he will be her almoner, and the peace of the future shall wipe out the memory of the past.

Suddenly she is told that Augustine, tired of Carthage, is about to depart for Rome, and her hopes are shattered, for she believes that now he shall be lost to her and God for ever. And yet this step of quitting Carthage, even though accomplished in secrecy (Augustine having slipped away from his mother in the night time) was the first great step towards his conversion.

For, having opened his school at Rome after recovering from a violent fever, he was so disgusted with the conduct of the students, and their habits of deception and dishonesty, that he applied for a chair of rhetoric in the City of Milan, and there was rejoined by his mother. Now in this city was "a man of God chosen," like Ananias of Damascus, to teach and illumine the great darkened intellect that was sent to him.

II

Attracted by the fame of St. Ambrose as a preacher, Augustine went to hear him; and having heard him, and admired his eloquence, the deep truths which he preached, and against which Augustine would have closed his ears, gradually sank into his mind, and gave the first great shock to those prejudices which he had conceived against Catholicity. For like all those who rage against the truth, he little understood it, and he found "that it was not against the Catholic religion he had barked, but against a chimera, invented by its enemies." And then, Sunday after Sunday, when St. Ambrose ascended his pulpit, he saw beneath him the widow and her child—she, calm, prayerful, patient, and the young professor, whose lectures half the youth of Milan were attending, modest, humble exteriorly, listening eagerly to the exposition of Christian truth, but pride, pride, pride for ever stiffening his neck, and steeling his heart against that first great act of long abasement by which he was to enter the portals of God's Church.

Irreligion and immorality, these twin giants

that ever work in unison guarded the gates of his heart. If one yielded for a moment, the other was all the more alert. If the powerful eloquence of St. Ambrose shattered every argument that in the secrecy of his heart Augustine fashioned against Catholicity, here was the sad companion of his guilt to protest against his embracing that religion which glorifies purity and virginity—and if ever, and alas! it was rarely, his soul, lying under its base subjection, clamored to be free from the degradation of vice—here was the vain philosophy that captivated him, and made him ashamed of the simplicity of the Gospel, and that doctrine of humility that is always the stumbling block of intellectual pride.

What hope was there for him at all? Here on the one side was the heresy which he not only believed but professed, pride, that waxed stronger with every fear of success, the strength of manhood allied with the strength of sin, and above all, this illicit love which was coiled round his heart like a serpent, and on the other, only the prayer of his Mother and the Sunday Sermon of St. Ambrose. But I am wrong! There was One also with him, and He "who bade the winds and waves be still," was now, at least, going to calm the tumult of this mighty mind. And in His own simple Divine way He chose as His Ministers—a Pagan and a child.

Alipius, a dear bosom friend of Augustine, was a young pagan who, in the midst of all infamy, had always worshiped purity, and knowing the terrible torture that Augustine suffered, he used reason with him, preaching to him, extolling the beau-

ties of virtue, painting in darkest colors the horrors of the hateful vice.

Maddened by his own helplessness, tortured by his passionate desire to be free, Augustine would listen patiently, and then rush into solitude, crying, "Leave me, leave me! not yet! not yet!"

And his friend would stare and wonder at him, and be silent in the face of such anguish. Then there would come to the soul of Augustine a celestial vision of chastity, clothed in white light, with a glittering band of children round her, pure, ethereal, divine, and she would point to her children and say: "Behold what these are doing—why canst thou not do it? They the unlearned—you the accomplished; they so weak in nature—you clothed in the strength of your manhood; they so frail—you so powerful!" and the vision would vanish, and leave him in an agony of shame and sorrow.

Then one day, a traveler came and told of a wonderful sight he had seen—a desert peopled with men who led the lives of angels, who sacrificed not only all sinful love—but all human affection, young men, calmly saying farewell to their affianced, and passing out from the gay city to the silent sands, and the brides that were to be tomorrow, espousing themselves in mystical union to the Lamb, leaving all things to follow Him. And Augustine, not able to contain his emotion, fled again into his garden and cried: "What are we doing? Did you not hear? The ignorant, the unlearned, carry the Kingdom of Heaven by storm, and we, with our boasted science, grovel on the earth! Is it not a shame that we have not

the courage to imitate them!" Noble words Augustine! At last! at last!

And he flings himself in anguish under a figtree, and he, the philosopher, the orator, the professor, sobs as if his heart would break with uncontrollable grief. And he hears the voice of a child in a neighboring garden singing its play-song; but his ears have never heard that childish melody before. He listens, and catches the singular refrain. "Tolle, Lege! Tolle, Lege—Take up and read!" Who ever heard a child utter such strange words before. But, perhaps, who knows the words might be a heavenly message to himself. And trembling with some strange emotion he takes up a book lying on the grass before him, and opening it by chance he reads, "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness; not in chambering and impurities; not in contention and envy, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscence."

And suddenly, as when in tropical climes the sunshafts break upon the darkness, and chase the shadows from valley and mountain, a great wave of light flooded his soul, and a strength and a sweetness descended upon him, and the tears of anguish still wet upon his cheeks are chased by tears of joy, such as angels shed when the wanderers are gathered into the fold. Paul had spoken to Augustine; the convert of Damascus to the convert of Milan; and the latter wondered at himself, and the mighty change that had been wrought in him—was he really the Augustine who only yesterday saw doubts and difficulties in Catholic truth? Was he really the slave, who used to

utter that pitiful prayer—"Give me continence, O Lord, but not yet!"

Why, surely Catholicity is not only the perfect revelation of the Lord, but it is the culmination of that very philosophy which is shadowed in Plato, and, therefore, it is a religion for not only babes and sucklings—but it is strong meat for the mightiest of the kings of thought, at whose feet he had sat and studied. And as for chastity, if every fiber of his heart shall be torn asunder, and tears of blood shall be shed, he will no longer be shamed by children, but consecrate by an inviolate vow body and soul alike to the service of Him who hath loved him with an everlasting love.

III

"O Lord, I am Thy servant, and the Son of Thy Handmaid; Thou hast broken my bonds asunder; to Thee will I offer a sacrifice of praise." Such are the opening words of the 5th Book of the Confessions. Emancipated, saved, as Daniel from the lions, as the children from the furnace, as David from his sin, he must sing a canticle of gratitude to His Deliverer, and lay upon the altar a sacrifice of prayer and praise. And surely if ever a human oblation could be an atonement to the Most High for sin it was the noble offering that Augustine now made. He laid his heart and intellect on the altar of the Lord. Purity filled the one; faith exalted the other. He had found the Beauty ever ancient, ever new, after which his soul had thirsted; and, except the inspired melodies of the Psalmist, Convert, too, like Augustine, there is no record of human speech so beautiful, so exalted,

so sublime, as those soliloquies and meditations in which he poured forth the ecstasies of his soul towards the great invisible Being, whom, unknown, he had worshiped and loved. I don't know if there be any record that the veil of the Unseen was lifted for Augustine, as for St. Paul and St. John. But I find it difficult to understand that anything less than the vision of the Eternal, could have inspired a human soul with such seraphic love, as that which clearly burned in the heart of our saint, and winged every word that he spoke or wrote, with celestial fire.

And yet, somehow we are more attracted by the oblation of his intellect, than by the sacrifice of his heart, and by the stupendous work that intellect accomplished when the light of Divine Faith was shed upon it.

The history of the Church is full of examples of mighty winds that were barren and fruitless till the sunshine of Faith fell upon them; but St. Augustine stands for ever in most brilliant testimony of the power of purity and faith to bring forth the flower and the fruit of graceful eloquence and solid wisdom, which the Church of God treasures even more than corporeal relics, and which even an unbelieving world would not willingly let perish.

And the singular fact remains, that although St. Augustine spent the best years of his life in heresy, when his mental power was fresh and vigorous, the world has not preserved one single line that he then wrote, one utterance from platform or forum, yet guards most jealously the riper products of his genius, for without faith

what is human wisdom or what is the "tinkling cymbal" of human eloquence compared with the trumpet tones of a voice, resonant with Divine power, and vibrating with the consciousness of truth and importance of its utterances?

And so, as Augustine the licentious student, is completely forgotten, and would to-day be unknown to men, were it not for his own most truthful and most pathetic "Confessions," so Augustine the orator and professor, is completely hidden by the glories that surround his name as a Doctor and a Saint, for as the eagle of the mountains, born and reared in a cage, is utterly unable to feel or exercise its strength, and beats its wings feebly, and is blinded by the faintest ray of light, and begins to love its captive degradation, but once free, it beats the air and feels fresh strength with every new pulsation of its wings, and soars at last into the Empyrean, and plunges fearlessly into frightful abysses, and poises itself over the roaring torrent and looks steadily on the face of the sun itself, so the soul of our saint, prisoned in the den of irreligion and vice, was utterly powerless to exercise its moral and mental energies, but once emancipated, free, it rose into the very highest spheres of thought, and plunged into the deepest and darkest problems of existence, and lifted itself into spheres of inaccessible light, and gazed steadily on the mystery that shrouds the majesty of the Eternal. Nothing was too great, and nothing too small for this searching intellect. It swept calmly over all these vexed questions that torture the souls of men—time and space, freewill and Divine foresight; the existence of evil and a

benevolent and all wise Providence; the inspiration of Scripture—the eternity of world—all passed in review before him, and he knew what the loftiest intellects had said about them, and then touched and transfigured them by the magic of his own great mind.

No one has ever told the world the limits of human knowledge, and the infinity of Divine Faith in clearer language than he. Plato told him all about God, told him even of the Word, Only-Begotten, who reposed for ever on the bosom of the Father, led him to the very boundary of the Christian Revelation, but stopped there—there was the gulf that could not be bridged over—there was the gulf across which for thirty years he strained his eyes in vain for a way whereby he could pass or a guide who would take him by the hand and lead him—until at last he saw in Christ the "Word made Flesh," and came to the knowledge of God through Him who was "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." And that knowledge once attained, behold everything underwent a transformation in his eyes.

The Scriptures, which he had derided for their simplicity, suddenly unfolded their sacred majesty in word and meaning, the philosophy he had adored became the dark obscured parchment scroll on which, invisible but to Christian eyes, the name of God was written, and Nature unfolded her thousand charms to him, and with her thousand voices echoed the peaceful exultation that filled his heart. And now, like the great saint of Assisi in later times, he began to love his life and the world, whose every aspect and accident revealed

the gentle presence of its King. In the colors that blend and mingle on the bosom of the great deep he saw the love of God ever considerate for his fretful and wayward child, and in a slender filament that binds together the glossy plumage of the dove he recognized the hand of Omnipotence that has fashioned the burning souls of the Seraphs.

IV

I have passed over, by design, the valuable services rendered by St. Augustine to the Church in his controversies with the heretics of his own age, such as the Donatists and Pelagians, for, although it must always be remembered that his writings about the Church's dogmas or discipline were and are of supreme importance, I prefer to linger on those wider issues where he comes directly into conflict with modern thought.

For, whereas the whole tendency of modern thought is to dissociate philosophy and religion, it was his constant task, as it is his highest glory to have united them. And it would be quite impossible to exaggerate his splendid services, not only to the Church, but to religion, in this great department of theological science.

His works are a storehouse of information and reasoning, from which every succeeding generation has borrowed material for defense or attack. One by one the great Christian thinkers have approached him, and bowing before his lofty genius, have taken from his hands, the material from which they have constructed works, that make their names memorable amongst men. And these,

not only Catholic writers, but such men as Paley, Chalmers, Butler, MacCulloch, who, each in turn, wrote on Natural Religion, and showed the Revelation of God, not in Scripture alone, but in nature herself. From St. Ambrose, his own master, down to the great statesmen who to-day hold a high and unique place in literature as in politics, every great illuminative intellect has been indebted to our saint, and if he had no other answer to that eternal impeachment, that our Church is opposed to reason and inquiry, the name of St. Augustine alone ought to be accepted as a sufficient refutation.

We are familiar with the derision and scorn which men try to pour on what they are pleased to consider a decaying faith, with neither virile thought nor fanatical enthusiasm to preserve it. We are grown quite accustomed to the cry: "Your torch is extinguished; your day is over; behold we light it anew at the fire of reason and, like the athletes in the lamp race of the Athenians, we shall pass that pure fire from hand to hand to the end of time."

Our answer is clear—Yes! and defiant! "Take your tiny lamp of reason and search the abysses." Make your minds a blank from which all preconceived or traditionary ideas are blotted out, and go find the truth. We make you a present of all that human ingenuity has devised to help you in your research: the figments of philosophers, the dreams of visionaries, even the solid discoveries in natural science. Take years of research and labor in your own individual meditation, and in the dust and mold of the world's libraries. Call aloud to

your gods to hearken to your cries, and rain down light from high Olympus. And when you are old and your hair is gray and your hands tremble, come to us who in the day of your strength you derided! That powerful objection of yours, which you launched so airily and confidently against Christianity, behold here it is, anticipated and answered, fifteen centuries ago by Augustine. And that brilliant fancy, which leaped up like an inspiration, when your brain was dull from much thought, and the midnight oil was burning low! Why, it passed the lips of St. Augustine in his long conversation with Monica and Alipius near the sea at Ostia, or in those numberless homilies at Hippo, when clustered around his episcopal chair, men wondered and women wept.

V

There is something sublime in the spectacle of this great mind, stretching far back into the past, and appropriating all the wisdom of the East and of Greece, and then reaching down the long centuries to our time, and coloring the thoughts of men, who cannot fail to admire his commanding genius, although they will not accept his authority for their faith.

There is nothing local or contracted about his genius. He spoke and wrote for the world, and unto all time; and, perhaps, the best proof of the importance that the world attaches to his pronouncements is that there is no author the authenticity of whose works and the meaning of whose words is so much questioned. Where he can be

quoted, there is no longer controversy. He is one of the supreme judges in the great court where questions of supreme importance are debated, and issues of the mightiest moment are decided, and from his judgment there is no appeal.

One of the fiercest controversies that has ever raged in the Church turned altogether on the question whether certain propositions were to be found in his writings; and a sect of heretics has built up one of its fundamental doctrines on a single text from his Scriptural comments where his works are distorted, and his meaning misapprehended. And yet this great mind bowed in humble submission to the Mother and Mistress of the Faithful, and submits his works to her judgment, to be corrected or even suspended from publication, if she thinks that in any way they can favor error or unbelief. Nay, even the Holy Gospels, which were to him as the bread of Life, and which bear on the very surface indication of their supernatural origin, he will not accept but from her hands.

And she with her great discernment, places her hand on his works, and gives them to the world with her mighty *imprimatur*. And every succeeding Pontiff who is compelled by the circumstances of his age to note the peculiar and evershifting errors that are put before the world disguised under the name of philosophy, points to Augustine, and his great pupil, Aquinas, as the exponents of her philosophical creed. And well she may. For in the supposition that she had not the great Eternal promises, which are the support of her prerogatives, and the credentials of her lofty mission,

she might shelter herself behind the works of St. Augustine, and there consider her position impregnable.

Such is our answer to the world! But to those of our own household—those weaklings in the faith, whose beliefs are shaken by every flippant jester, or by a padded article in a review, and who think, alas! that they are then only wise when they commence to doubt, we say in all charity and pity: "These things, too, passed through the mind of St. Augustine; he saw their falsehood, set them aside, and was at peace!"

VI

I have drawn for you now the shadows and the lights that mark the life and character of our saint, and if I have drawn the shadows too darkly or deeply, it is that the lights may be seen more fully and clearly. I make no apology for detaining you too long on the life of him, who is your Patron, and whose name to myself has been a name of magic from my youth. Just for a moment, however, I will take you back to one calm scene immediately after his conversion, when his mother and he now poured forth their souls freely after the long years of spiritual separation. There is a famous picture by Scheffer familiar to you all in photography and engravings. It represents that famous evening at Ostia when Monica and Augustine quietly talked over one of those sublime problems that always occupied his mind. Mother and son are seated together—the mother's hands folded in her lap, and her child's hands clasped between them. On the worn features of

the Mother, and the well-chiseled intellectual features of the son, is peace, deep peace—peace which the world never gives. But insensible to the beauties of nature around them in that land where every landscape is a sublime picture, the eyes of mother and son are fixed on the skies. Behind the blue dome of immensity is that Being, whose love had surrounded them, whose mercy had exalted them, seeing only the tears of the mother and forgetting the iniquities of the child. From the faces of our saints and from the contemplation of their lives, we, too, must look on high. To Him who is on High, whose humility has exalted and given Him the Name which is above all Names, our thoughts must soar, our love be directed, our affections centered, if we hope to enjoy the peace of Augustine and Monica here, and call the former our Father and our friend, in the presence of His Master and Friend in the sinless bliss, the perfect peace, the calm joys of our Heavenly Home.

Feast of St. Alphonsus Liguori's Centenary[1]

I

THERE is an empire in the midst of the empires of the world, and its laws are not framed by flesh and blood, and its praises are not on the lips of men, and its glory is not that which perishes when the grave has closed and the epitaph is written. It is conterminous with the empires of the earth, for it is throned on all the dwellingplaces of men; yet it reaches out unto eternity, and Angels are its subjects, and Archangels its ministers. As subtle as the spirit of air, it envelopes this material world, and penetrates into high places, and into the lowliest; and the world has raged against it, and sought to destroy it, yet it abides in its strength, and even time will not touch it, for it is sealed with the seal of Immortality.

Strange and mysterious are its teachings and its laws, making little of earth and the desires of men, and for ever preaching another world around us, above us, within us, inhabited by spirits, whose transcendent strength and beauty shall be ours, if we learn to despise the trappings of earthly pride, and the desires of a nature that is grown corrupt, and try to lift ourselves even to the full stature of the perfection which was ours before we fell.

[1] Preached in the Redemptorist Church, Limerick, July, 1887.

And the subjects of that empire, whilst toiling, like ordinary men, live half their lives in that same world of spirits, and speak to visions that faith creates, and take ideal types of sanctity for models, and dream of great white thrones in the clouds, where yet they shall dwell, and pray to unseen beings for strength in peril, and for hope when they faint, and believe that power descends upon them from the skies, and that dark spirits vanish into the nether Hell when the legions of Heaven sweep from the clouds at the voice, or at the command, of prayer.

And this empire, too, has its heroes, those who had keener faith and insight into all the awful mysteries that exist around us, who made themselves more like the angels by becoming less like to men, who labored to extend the dominion of Jesus Christ—on Whom the spirit of God was more fully poured out, and who were to their fellowmen as pillars of fire in a darkened land, and as voices crying in the wilderness. Such, beyond doubt, was the wonderful saint, who after a laborious and fruitful life, passed, just a hundred years ago, into his rest and reward, and whose name is familiar to you, as the Father of your Spiritual Fathers, who call themselves by his name, who follow his guidance, obey the discipline he established, and on whom the mantle of his great spirit—the spirit of zeal and prayer, and work for Christ—has fallen.

In the Empire of the Church of which I have spoken, there are two purifying and ennobling elements, which are the lot of all humanity, but which, when duly consecrated, are the means given

us by God, to repair the sad wounds of our fallen humanity, and make us worthy of our angelic destiny. To fallen Adam it was said: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou labor"; the second Adam said: "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross." To work and to suffer is the common lot of men. To work and to suffer, and thereby to lift oneself above the earth—this is the making of saints. And I think we shall come to a full understanding of the character of St. Alphonsus if we consider his life under this twofold aspect—if we study the marvelous deeds he accomplished. Still more the martyrdom he endured, with the fortitude of the early saints, at the hands of men and even at the hands of God.

II

It was a happy day for St. Alphonsus and the Church, that day, when puffed up with a vain conceit of his great intellectual powers, he was suddenly plunged into an agony of shame, *made ashamed* before his legal brethren and a vast assemblage of his countrymen—shame of defeat where he was most assured of victory—deeper shame, for he appeared to the world merely as a casuist and a quibbler, who, for the sake of a momentary triumph, had sacrificed justice and truth.

For a whole month he labored at his desk, piling up argument after argument, until the fair fabric rose before him clear, perfect, and flawless, and he had counted on the applause of his friends and the discomfiture of his enemies—and behold the fair fabric has dissolved at a single word, and

he leaves the Court a shamed and humbled man, and the bitter cry of Solomon rises from his heart: "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity."

Not all! Alphonsus! Not all! Lo! here at hand is work that shall not perish; lo! here at hand is spiritual and intellectual labor that shall not fail of its fruit and its reward! Lo! here is toil, not the poor gain of wealth, which the rust will consume and thieves will steal, not the weaving of vain cobwebs of passing glory, which the hand of Death will brush aside, but treasures that will last for your enjoyment during the long years of eternity and glory that cannot fade, for it emanates from Him "Who is the splendor of eternal light and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty!" For here round about in this Neapolitan land, are souls sick unto death with weariness and sin. The burden of life presses heavily upon them. Under the sweltering sun they labor, and seek their reward in the black bread and the squalid den which they call home, and sometimes they seek a shelter beneath the walls of their village church, and mutter a few prayers which have lost their meaning for them, and lift eyes of despair to the rude crosses, which tell them, too, of suffering, but have lost their sweet symbolism of mercy and love.

For religion is dead or decaying amongst these rude people, and the Divine story of Infinite Love and patience has lost its life-giving power and strength, and has become even as an empty legend, and even the Madonna, the ever-present, ever-loving Madonna, seems to have left the earth, and taken with her her purity and gentleness and holi-

ness, for they no longer revere her virtues, though they have not lost all faith in her power.

All this Alphonsus saw with the instinct, or rather, the inspiration of a Saint, and here was the work for which now he had to exchange the gown of the lawyer, and the exciting triumphs of legal acumen and eloquence! But he saw more! It were at best a pitiful sight—that of this multitude of human beings, passing from life to death through labors unrewarded, except with the solace that comes from sin; but there was eternity! eternity before them, and would it not be work, the most sublime that human hand ever touched, to fit those souls for Heaven—to save those souls from Hell.

For mind you, dearly beloved, those Saints of God are no visionaries, as the world too freely supposes. Alphonsus did not take his conception of Hell from poetic dreamers, who fill its gloomy mansions with angelic intelligences, who deliver pompous speeches against the Most High, nor did he follow the idea of his own countrymen and create puppets of the imagination that the world might see with pleasant curiosity. He saw Hell as the fire—eternal—inextinguishable—kindled by the breath of the Most High—with the smoke thereof going up for ever and ever, and the worm never dying: and day by day falling from the streets of the sunny city into the awful abyss; he saw souls, which were present to the blood-stained eyes of Christ, in Gethsemane, and the dying eyes of Christ on Calvary.

And he heard the voice of God calling him to save that mighty multitude, and straightway he

went down into the cities, he went out into the plains, and the poor and ignorant came to him, hungry for the bread of life, and thirsting for the waters that spring from the living fountain. How he accomplished his mighty mission from that 23rd of October, 1723, when he assumed the ecclesiastical dress, down to that day, when amidst his brethren, and like His Master, in agony, he gave up his pure soul to God—the Bull of his Canonization tells us. "No toil, no trouble," says Gregory XVI., "were spared by him to recall men steeped in vice and wickedness to the loving embraces of God." In summer and winter, in mighty cities and lonely hamlets, in the pulpit, speaking from the depths of his great heart the eternal truths, in the confessional surrounding his trembling penitents with an atmosphere of love, to-day among the lazzaroni, who slept their useless lives away on the quays of Naples, to-morrow amongst the unlettered peasants of the hills, with no thought of rest or relaxation, but of spending and being spent in the service of his Maker—such was his life of noble work and noble sacrifice.

He made a vow—a difficult one, except to a great Saint—and he kept it. "He would never lose a moment of time that could be given to God's service." Now, work of any kind is elevating and ennobling. Be it ever so menial, ever so humble, it has an effect of consecration on the soul. But this work of St. Alphonsus! Not so much a servant, as a co-operator with Christ; lifting the fallen, succoring the weak, healing the bruised, bringing back to the ever present cross that crowns every hill in that land of faith its message of ever endur-

ing mercy to those who had forgotten its mystery and meaning. Sixty years is a long span of life! Sixty years and sixty times sixty is but a moment! Which is true? Both true. Sixty years of labor for things that perish—what is it, but the anguished dream of a moment; what means it, but laurels that fade, and a name that is written on water? But sixty years for God, such as Alphonsus gave—ah! it is a long span of life, for it reaches in effect out into eternity.

And who, that has not seen the archives of Heaven, can tell what mighty and enduring work was accomplished during these years by Alphonsus. If, as St. Augustine says, the raising of one soul from sin to peace is more than the creation of a world, what value shall we set on the countless Souls that were gained to Christ by the ministry of our Saint! As simple priest, as founder of a mighty order, as Bishop, as doctor, who shall calculate the victories of grace, the sweetness poured upon sorrow, the calm that succeeded despair, on the millions of souls that came under his influence. You may know, dear brethren, at least any of you that has sung from his heart that hymn of gladness that comes after repentance, you may conjecture what peace flowed over the sad earth from his ministry, but the glory that he gave the Most High shall never be known by angels or men till the day of reckoning when the trumpet shall sound, and the seals be broken, and the books shall be opened in the Valley of the Judgment.

III

But St. Alphonsus would also perpetuate his work amongst them. He would pass away in time, but the struggle was a never-ending one, and why should he not secure that, ever in the field, laboring for Christ Jesus, should be a band of Missionaries, filled with his spirit, penetrated by his faith, and whose motto should be his own: "He hath sent me to preach to the poor, to heal the bruised of heart." "But were there not already in the Church," some critic would ask, "several religious Communities, which St. Alphonsus could join, and to which he might transfer his marvelous zeal and love for souls?" Well, those who speak thus do not understand at all the workings of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church; they do not know that the spiritual wants of men take different shapes at different times, and that the assaults made by the ever active, ever watchful enemy are directed against the Church in so many various forms, as to argue at once their supernatural origin and Satanic ingenuity.

It is no secret that St. Dominic was raised up by God to counteract the Albigensian heresy, that St. Ignatius was specially selected to stem the awful torrent of irreligion and immorality that flowed from the German Reformation; and surely the ecclesiastical historian is not all mistaken who declares that St. Alphonsus got a special mission to neutralize the awful far-reaching destructive consequences that arose from the Voltairian crusade against religion, and the less apparent, yet not at all insignificant, results of the spread of Jansenist doctrine in France and Italy.

For what was the one object of Voltaire's existence? What did he aim at in his writings? What did he try to destroy by those awful powers of satire and ridicule, with which God, for His own wise end, had invested him? Why, he makes no secret of it! He tells the world plainly that there is one whose worship galls him, whose name is hateful to him, whose doctrines he detests, and whose religion he will destroy, and that is the same Lord Jesus, whose love had captivated the soul of St. Alphonsus, before whom, in His adorable Sacrament, he spent many hours of unutterable bliss, whose Name he is determined to write on the hearts of men, and the fire of whose love he will fling broadcast over the earth, through these new missionaries he has adopted; until the sophism and the satire of infidels will fall heedless on souls that shall be lifted by faith above reason, and by Love even above faith, almost unto the perfect vision of their God.

But, you will say, why, one would think that these infidels would be met more rationally by clever doctors in the Universities and academies of the Church. What have poor peasants to do with these dangerous teachings? or how can simple missionaries deal with controversies that are so complicated that the very highest intelligences are lost in them? Yes! but St. Alphonsus knew that these dangerous doctrines would filter down from the high places to their lowliest; that in an incredibly short space of time, the most unlettered peasant would hear of and grasp at doctrines that are so flattering to human passion, and with regard to the means St. Alphonsus employed, by far

the best antidote against irreligion is a personal love for Jesus Christ—the same that armed innocent virgins in Rome against the arguments of philosophers and the fierce arguments of the fire and the beast—the same that touched the heart of St. Paul and made him eloquent before the Greeks at Athens—the same that in every age, is more than match for subtlety of argument and charm of eloquence on the lips when the heart is cold and silent.

And, therefore, St. Alphonsus, with his own great wisdom, interpreting rightly the words of Christ: "I came to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I, but that it be kindled?" strove, first of all, to create in his own soul a passionate love for his Divine Master, then that love he would communicate to his brethren in the order he established, thence it would flow freely on souls that would quicken into life under its blessed influence; and he enshrined that great passion of his life in two little works that will be read in the Churches of France, long after the fiendish works of Voltaire are forgotten—"The Visits to the Blessed Sacrament" and the "Love of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Inspired by the same Divine Love, he entered into that controversy that for seventy years agitated the great College of the Sorbonne, exposed Catholic and Christian doctrines to the ridicule of the unbelievers, created a kind of suppressed antagonism between the Church of France and the center of Catholic union, and was only finally swept away at the last great general Council of the Vatican.

With the theology of this Jansenist controversy we have nothing to do. But its whole spirit was so fatal to Christian piety, so opposed to Christian mercy and love, that our Saint threw the whole passion of his soul, and all the resources of his splendid intellect and his vast learning into the contest.

The Jansenist doctrines were gloomy, dark, despondent, despairful. They made salvation an impossibility to some, they made it a chance, a mere chance, to those who were the elect. They nullified all the Gospel promises, and those Divine invitations to repentance, those guarantees of mercy, which you have so often heard with hope, they put them aside, and represented mankind as moving on under a Divine curse to inevitable destruction.

When condemned by the Church, their worst effects had passed away, they left in the Church of France a spirit of severity and ungentleness, a spirit of terror and fear, that produced lamentable results amongst the people, and made the Confessional a tribunal of unbending justice, and not of surpassing mercy. St. Alphonsus wrote against the evil, and directed his remonstrances first to the laity, then to the priesthood of the world. And although when writing against Deists and Materialists he showed wonderful learning and great reasoning power, yet he preferred, as I have said, to meet that evil by increasing the love of Jesus Christ. It was the Jansenist dispute that brought forth all his marvelous talents as theologian and controversialist, and produced works that will last as long as the Church itself, and which have earned for him the title of Doctor. He addressed

the laity in a little treatise on ascetic theology that is familiar to you—his treatise on Prayer, and he drew up for the priesthood a series of definite decisions on all practical questions concerning morals, which he embodied in a work that is as familiar as the Bible to priests—his Moral Theology.

IV

Now, I should like to linger for a moment on this particular point, for it appears to me that, next after the foundation of the Redemptorist Order, this was the great work of his life. There is in the Catholic Church an institution that assumes and commands such power, that has such lofty and sublime pretensions, that is so complicated in its workings, yet so perfect, and that rules so universally throughout the world that, if I had no other proof of the Church's divine origin, I would accept that institution as a final and satisfactory argument. I speak of the Confessional. The idea of the Confessional must have come from God. Man, with all his pride, could never have attempted to assume the power of the priest in Confessional, if God Himself did not communicate it. Think of it, dear brethren. It is the government of human souls. It is the right to have laid bare before you the awful secrets of the human heart. It is the right to go down into and probe and examine those sacred depths of the human conscience which the eye of God alone can pierce. It is the privilege of drawing aside the veil, which every poor human being draws down so tightly over his secrets that no friend can be so dear as ever to touch it! But

with this privilege comes a frightful responsibility. Not alone the responsibility of keeping those secrets inviolate—that is easy enough—but the responsibility of guiding these souls through dark and intricate ways into the ways of sweetness and light, for of all the strange mysteries that come under human cognizance, the most mysterious is the human heart. Its feelings, its thoughts, its desires, its waywardness, its meanness, its nobility, its grandeur, are inexplicable except to Him who made it.

Every day in your local hospitals people stand eager and watchful around a couch where a patient is lying, over whom is the surgeon and his knife. Life or death depends on the success of the operation. A single tremor of the hand, a slight misdirection of the mind, will be fatal. Will any surgeon assume the responsibility but one who has steadied nerves by physical exercise and his intellect by careful study? But every day, and in every Catholic Church operations more delicate, because more spiritual, have to be performed, and do you not think that they who are commissioned to touch the delicate nerves of the human soul, ought to have strength and knowledge for their mysterious work? Every day throughout the churches of the world, whenever a priest flings the purple stole around his neck, he has to witness sad tragedies where he alone can bring relief, he has to hear the suppressed sob from lips that never tremble before the world, and to see tears fall from eyes that at all other times are proudly dry. And do you not think that he requires a scientific training to guide the unwary, to console the

wretched, to bind the bruised and to lift the fallen? Now, the "guide, philosopher, friend," of the Catholic priesthood throughout the world is St. Alphonsus Liguori.

It is no exaggeration to state that in all doubts and difficulties, and they are many and frequent, there is not a priest in the world that does not fly to our Saint for light and guidance; and there is not a single penitent throughout the world, of all the vast numbers who throng the confessional of Christendom, who is not guided by his wisdom, and directed by his knowledge. What Plato is in ancient philosophy; what Thomas Aquinas is in Christian philosophy; what Bellarmine is in dogma; that St. Alphonsus is in the practical department of ethical and moral science. He has so completely appropriated that department to himself, that none of his predecessors in the same department is ever quoted, and all his successors in the same science are simply his pupils and commentators.

And if a priest were to leave your shores in the morning, and were to go forth in the scriptural sense, without scrip or staff or shoe, he must at least, in his most abject poverty, take three books with him—his breviary, his missal, and the moral theology of St. Alphonsus—the first to sing the praises of his God, the second to celebrate the eternal Sacrifice, the third, to guide to the footstool of God in Heaven whatever souls may be entrusted to him, for well might he say with the Psalmist: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my footsteps."

But what is the spirit of this great work? Need

I say that it is the direct conversion of everything Jansenistic or severe? The spirit of Christlike mercy is shed over it. In this and the supplemental works he wrote for Confessors—the priest is father, physician, counselor; Judge—yes! but not so much to condemn as to absolve. And here we meet with what I call the miracle of his life—his profound knowledge of the human heart, and his complete mastery of every branch of theological and scriptural science, and his intimate acquaintance with the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church! I have said the workings of the human heart are infinite; and I am aware that there may be possibilities of greatness or of wickedness that have not as yet been developed. But as far as our knowledge goes, there is not a chord in the heart or conscience of men that St. Alphonsus has not touched, and heard therefrom the harsh discord of passion, or the harmonies of celestial virtues. He knows everything that man can say or think or do! From the rapt ecstasies of a saint, who lives half in heaven, down to the slimy abysses of a poor soul who is tied up by his fellowmen as a brute who would injure and destroy—nothing was concealed from him. From the earnest, passionate struggle that a soul in the beginning makes against temptation to the sad compliance and despair—from the scrupulous anxieties of a timid soul who is ever fearful of sin to the cool refinement of villainy of those who live to make sin a science—all was familiar to him. He is never surprised at anything. Like a cool physician he holds his hand on the pulse of humanity, and is always ready with a clear dogmatic opinion. He ascends

with the ease of a spirit, from a contemplation of the most loathsome things, to a meditation on the most sublime; he knows how to touch the most awful diseases of the human soul without suffering himself or his pupils to catch the slightest defilement. The Divine Law, the Natural Law, Human Law—he is perfectly acquainted with all, and tells you where they unite, where they combine, where they conflict, and with all his great charity, he never suffers the slightest departure from what is just and righteous—he will not allow man to detract from the glory that is due to God—nor from the justice he owes to his brother. In a word, we may apply to the directive theology of St. Alphonsus the words of Holy Writ, and say that in his direction of souls: "Mercy and truth have met; justice and peace have kissed."

V

And then his marvelous learning! Where did he find time to read these books? If I except St. Augustine and a modern English writer, I do not know any one who can use the Holy Scriptures like St. Alphonsus! and apparently he has read through a whole library of theology and asceticism. I see the holy man, rising with the dawn, and with the dawn in his confessional; I know he gives two hours each day to the preparation, celebration and thanksgiving of Mass; I know he spends hours before the Blessed Sacrament in silent prayer; I see him directing the affairs of a great Order, and journeying from Scala to Nocera, thence to Ilicito and Caposele, visiting the communities that are

under his spiritual guidance; I know that bishops consult him in their difficulties, and numberless submit to him cases of conscience—then half the year he is out on his mission, preaching without cessation; exhorting, receiving and absolving sinners—and to crown all, the Holy Father makes him a Bishop, and doubles his labors and his cares—and now he has to govern 200 or 300 priests, visit every parish and every religious community, confirm and ordain, go down to his seminary and regulate its discipline and its studies—and with all this, he actually is able to read more closely than any student in his seminary, than any Professor in his college.

Take alone the Index to that little volume of prayer of which I have spoken, and just read the names of the theologians he has consulted. It would take a month of hard labor for an ordinary priest to verify those quotations alone. Where did he get this power, that is not knowledge so much as inspiration? I think I know the secret. "Where is your library?" said St. Thomas to St. Bonaventure, "you who have written so much?" And the Saint pointed to his Crucifix. And I am pretty certain that the library of St. Alphonsus was the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

Before that mysterious Source of light and grace he spent many hours of the day. He commenced no arduous work without first committing it to the protection of the Sacred Heart: and whenever he experienced those doubts that will come to all merely human intelligences he sought the counsel of Him Who was the "light of the world." And as grace supplemented human

strength, light from on High supplemented the weakness of human perceptions.

But had he any other source of strength? Yes! and I dare not, I cannot forget it! That sublime vision that struck the eyes of St. John in Patmos with its splendor, the "woman clothed with the sun," had also shed the light of her beauty and her brightness on our Saint, and kindled a love within him, which broke forth in praise that to a worldly or impious mind would seem extravagant.

To his pure and lofty mind, the awful grandeur of Mary's sanctity was a perpetual source of wonderment, and he dwelt on it with that intense pleasure and enthusiasm with which saints always regard whatever is a glory of God's handiwork. It lifted him above earth to perceive that one of God's human creatures could be made capable of such splendor of virtue and power as the Mother of God possessed, and failing human speech to paint her spiritual beauty he had recourse to the word of the Divinity, and enlisted on her behalf the psalmist and the inspired anthem of the Canticle of Canticles to praise and exalt her and pour from his overflowing heart the happiness and joy that filled it for God's wonderful dealings with his handmaid.

And once possessed of these sublime ideas he cannot rest until the world adopts them, and sends up to Mary's throne in Heaven the incense of its praise and veneration. And he appeals to the selfishness of the human heart to love her, for she has power beyond angels to save and protect; and the lightnings of God's anger cannot smite those who rest under the shadow of her protection. To

all things of darkness and evil she is the resistless foe, clad in the awful strength of her purity. She keeps far from her, and from those she protects, all things of slime and sin; the very thought of her alone chases impure suggestions, the very whisper of her name shatters the strength of spirits that are defiled; the slightest homage ensures her enduring protection; and he exhausts all the resources of his own eloquent language to persuade men of her dignity and her privileges, of her mercy and her power. And for himself—well, he is amply rewarded in being her servant and her preacher; and he reflects very often with ever-increasing consolation: "They that work by me shall not sin; they that preach me shall have life everlasting."

VI

Yet, great as was his influence, priceless his work for God, we should hesitate to name him saint if there were not something else to crown his sanctity. Power is to be reverenced, but "power is made perfect in infirmity," and it belongs to St. Alphonsus as a right, as a privilege, that he should suffer. And he did.

I do not for a moment pretend to have gauged the depths of this great soul so perfectly that I can say with any certainty how much he endured, for in any case, the keenest sufferings are those which are not expressed to the eyes of men, and great saints have the talent of keeping their secret sorrows for the eye of God alone. But we can form an approximate idea of what even saints endure by considering what exactly we should feel in simi-

lar circumstances, making always allowance for the fact, that if great Saints have great graces, they at the same time have souls whose very grandeur makes them more sensible to pain than ordinary beings—for the more lofty they are the more refined—the more refined the more sensitive to those tortures that come from men, from the hand of God, and, perhaps, still more frequently from themselves.

If we had no historical facts to prove it, we might fairly conjecture that St. Alphonsus was bitterly opposed in everything that he undertook for the glory of God, and the service of religion. For, it is a fact that admits of no exception, that never yet has a good work been attempted, without being, in its very inception, violently thwarted and opposed. Nay, there never has been a work of any real worth attempted that has not been opposed by the wise and the good. The work of St. Alphonsus was no exception.

He had no sooner, at the special request of a holy Bishop, and the still more earnest request of a holy nun, laid the foundation of his great Order, than immediately a storm was raised around him, terrific in its intensity, and promising, alas, to be duly successful in its attempts at destruction.

St. Alphonsus was called a fanatic, an enthusiast, a visionary, and a self-seeker. All the old objections against the establishment of regular orders were paraded before him. Still he persevered. Then his brethren grew troublesome. Merely evangelizing the poor! What a paltry object! Would he not establish colleges? Would he not extend their sphere of labor and diversify

it by embracing several objects? No! was the answer! "He hath sent me to preach to the poor!" "Then we shall leave!" And they did; fell away from his side, like the Apostles of old, scandalized because of his humility, not knowing of what spirit they were. And with two companions alone, the saint commenced his mighty work.

I pass over the long years of his labors for Christ, merely saying that during these years "thou shalt labor!" "thou shalt suffer!" was his lot, and come to the end just to see how God perfected his work.

St. Alphonsus had been Bishop and had laid aside his miter and staff, and was looking forward to some peaceful years, when hot and heavy from the hand of God, sorrow fell upon him. He was struck by disease, agonizing, chronic disease, which bent him together in throes of suffering, so that he could not look upon the "sweet heavens," hardly lift his eyes to the faces of his fellowmen.

Sharp upon this came mental anguish—a trial so bitter that they alone who have passed through its agonies can realize it. A feeling of despair came over him—an intense fear that his life was misspent, and that the fire and the worm alone remained as his reward. Would he ever see God's face but in anger? Had he done God's work carelessly? Those souls, those thousand souls that had passed through his hands to be prepared for eternity—where were they? Suppose that one soul even was lost through indiscretion, could he ever look on the face of Jesus Christ? And after all were these years wasted? Was all his work a heap of ashes, corroded by earthly vanity? Did

not self, self, enter into everything? And if it should be so, great God! is he never to see the face of Him, whom behind his Sacramental veils he had so passionately worshiped and loved? Is he never to touch the hands of Christ, never to hear that voice, that is sweeter than honey of the honeycomb? And Mary, Mary, the Queen and Empress of his soul, whose face hallowed his dreams, whose presence his waking moments, is he never to see her, but to go down into the pit amongst all those things he feared and loathed, and be compelled to blaspheme those whom he loved with all the passionate earnestness of a pure heart?

I do not want to deprecate the sufferings of the martyrs, but I had rather pass through the fire fifty times, and be ground by the teeth of wild beasts, than endure one day's martyrdom when the face of God is clouded in the heavens, and the peace of God is broken in the heart.

And thus he died. In the tortures of physical pain, in the agony of acute despair, under the frowns of men—what more was there to make him like Him who died, in the tortures of crucifixion—with the cry on his lips: "My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?" and with the cry in the ears: "Vah, if Thou art the Son of God save Thyself, and we will believe in Thee."

Of course, after his death, all things righted themselves. The Order was united and strengthened and spread itself over the civilized earth—decree after decree has come forth, sanctioning his works, and finally making him a Doctor of the Church; the sunshine of God is streaming after the storm; but let us not forget that it was in the

storm he died, as the darkness came down on Calvary and the lightning flashed when his great Master declared that his work, too, was accomplished.

Saint Joseph

Preached during the Forty Hours' Adoration.

So solemn is the Presence in which we stand there is one idea uppermost in the minds of all, that silence is the only fitting form of worship. It is not every day that our Divine Lord breaks the monotony of His hidden sacramental life to come before us face to face, not for the passing moment of Benediction, but for long hours of the day and night.

And upon such occasions, realizing more deeply than usual the hidden but awful Presence of our Divine Lord, looking upon Him, who is "all in all" to us for time and for eternity, it seems almost irreverent to break the solemn silence even by verbal prayers; there is but one worship worthy of such an occasion, the silent meditation of minds, impressed by a deep sense of the majesty of God's Presence and the silent homage of hearts, overflowing with gratitude and love.

And yet we cannot conceive how our Blessed Lord would be displeased when He knows that the silence is broken only to speak of the most wonderful invention of His love; and that the attention of His worshiping children is drawn away from Him for a moment only that it might afterwards be fixed more steadily upon Him.

To-day, too, we have to notice a coincidence that

illustrates in a singular manner the spirit of the Catholic Church, and one of the many unspeakable designs of God. I will not call it an accident, and I do not think it was a purely human thought that selected the Feast of Saint Joseph for the first most solemn act of worship that we pay to our Sacramental God.

But in whatever way the idea originated, it was a happy one; and it exemplifies a truth often exemplified in the history of the Church, that as Saint Joseph, when upon earth, was the foster-father and guardian of God's most precious treasures, Jesus and Mary, so in Heaven he continues His watchful protection over Jesus hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, and over the Church of God, the type of Mary.

This evening, therefore, our Divine Lord will share His praises with His foster-father. And we will worship our Divine Lord, as we would have worshiped Him during His Sacred Infancy upon earth, in the arms of him who has been well called the type of the Eternal Father.

As the life of Saint Joseph was a hidden life upon earth, so devotion to Saint Joseph, deep and ardent though it always has been, has been hidden in the Church for centuries. It was reserved for Pius IX.—Pius, the priest of the Sacred Heart, and the preacher of Mary's privileges—to bring Saint Joseph more prominently before the faithful, thus re-uniting, as it were, to the eyes of the faithful, the Sacred Trinity upon earth. The Holy Family of the house of Nazareth: Jesus and Mary and Joseph.

In the Apostolic Decree, which constituted Saint

Joseph patron of the Universal Church, it is stated, "that the Church has always most highly honored and praised the most blessed Joseph, next to his Spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in time of trouble."

The development of doctrine and devotion in the Church, however, was necessarily very slow. For centuries the whole attention of the Church was directed to maintaining the true doctrines about the Incarnation. This was the fundamental truth of Christianity, and this was the most frequently and violently attacked. The God-Man, given by His own love, and the charity of the Father, to the Church, was the precious treasure upon which, during the early years of her existence, all her attention was lavished.

All the marvelous mysteries wound around that central mystery of the Incarnation had to be explained; and all the attacks, open and insidious, that sought to detract from the truth of that mystery and the honor of God had to be repelled. By degrees, when those controversies on the Incarnation had subsided, and the Church had a breathing-time, without for ever forgetting her Spouse, the Son, she directed her attention to the Mother; and by degrees, thinking them over first in her own deep mind, she put before her faithful truth after truth, and dogma after dogma about the Mother—her royal dignity, her Divine Maternity, her rich prerogatives, until, in our own age, she reached the primary truth of all, that the Mother had never known sin, and the reality of her position was recognized—a Virgin and sinless. "And thus," as a holy priest has written, "the adoration of

Jesus and the devotion to Mary took their places immovably in the sense of the faithful, and in the practical system of the Church, one shedding light upon the other, and both instructing, illuminating, nourishing, and sanctifying the people."

The claims of the all-Holy Son and His virginal Mother being satisfied, the Church was able to turn her attention to the guardian of both, the father of the household at Nazareth.

We have said that the Church is a type of Mary, and there can be no doubt that Mary is a teacher of the Church. When, therefore, the truth of her Son's Incarnation was placed beyond doubt, and any honor paid to Saint Joseph could not prejudice the Divine origin of her Child, the Church of God learned from her teacher's lips the dignity and the holiness of God, and gathered from her heart deep feelings of love and gratitude to Him.

Mary's Divine Maternity protected and confirmed the truth of our Divine Lord's origin: but by a wise decree the Church did not publicly preach the dignity of Saint Joseph until the truth of the Incarnation was put beyond the cavils of heretics, lest the presence of Joseph might prejudice the exclusive right of the Eternal Father to the Paternity of the Son.

Devotion to an earthly father, even though he were only foster-father, might have given the enemies of Jesus Christ a pretense for denying His eternal generation from the Father; we must not, therefore, be surprised to find that public devotion to Saint Joseph was not established in the Church as early as devotion to the Blessed Virgin, because the honor of our Divine Lord is to be maintained

whoever should suffer; and, whereas Mary's Divine Motherhood was the surest protection of the honor of the Son, devotion to Saint Joseph would have been seized upon by captious heretics as a proof that the Church was regardless of that first truth of the Incarnation, that Christ had no earthly father—as Saint Athanasius declares: "Born of the Father before all ages, born of a Mother in time."

But, although the Church's devotion to Saint Joseph was not explicitly declared until the thirteenth century there can be no doubt that his claims to the reverence of the faithful were fully acknowledged even in the earliest ages.

It is to the East that common opinion traces the origin of the devotion to Saint Joseph. Before Saint Athanasius, in the fourth century, sent missionaries into Abyssinia to instruct the Copts in the rites of the Church of Alexandria, the sojourn of the Holy Family in Egypt was commemorated in Abyssinia, and a special festival was kept in honor of Saint Joseph. So, too, amongst the Christians of Syria, so ancient is the devotion, there is no record of its introduction amongst them. There can be no doubt, too, that in the Greek Church the devotion is of great antiquity, as may be gathered from their hymns, and the custom that everywhere prevailed in Greece of calling children by the name of Joseph.

The history of the introduction of devotion to Saint Joseph into the West in instructive.

Father Faber is of opinion that the devotion sprang up in the West itself—in the South of France. "It rose," he says, "from a Confrater-

nity in the white city of Avignon, and was cradled by the swift Rhone, that river of martyr memories that runs by Lyons and Arles, and flows into the same sea that laves the shores of Palestine. The land which the contemplative Magdalen had consecrated by her hermit life, and where the songs of Martha's school of virgins had been heard praising God, and where Lazarus had worn a miter instead of a grave-cloth: it was there that he, who was so marvelously Mary and Martha combined, first received the glory of his devotion."

There can be no doubt now, however, that the great majority of ecclesistical writers trace the devotion to the East, and attribute its introduction into Europe to the Carmelite Order. And with the introduction of this devotion into the East came another devotion to the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; and from this, it has been remarked that it was Mary brought Joseph before the world, and Joseph brought Jesus; the children of Our Lady of Mount Carmel introduced into Europe devotion to Saint Joseph, and devotion to Saint Joseph was followed by devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

This was the order of events: In 1208, Blessed Juliana had her wonderful vision, which moved Urban IV. in 1264, to establish the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament; in 1215 the Fourth Council of Lateran declared that in the Holy Eucharist "the bread is transubstantiated into the body of Christ, and the wine into His blood, by Divine Power."

Honorius III. ascended the pontifical throne in 1216, and during his pontificate the Carmelites passed into Europe, introducing devotion to Saint

Joseph, and Honorius III. was commanded by Our Blessed Lady, in a vision, to recognize and solemnly to approve them.

And half a century had not gone by when the solemn office and feast of the Blessed Sacrament were established and devotion to Our Divine Lord and His earthly guardian had spread through the Universal Western Church.

A century later the greatest doctors of the Church exerted all their learning and eloquence to propagate this devotion to Saint Joseph. Albertus Magnus, the teacher of Saint Thomas, composed an office in his honor. Before his time another Dominican, Brother Bartholomew of Trent, had written his biography.

In 1416, whilst the Council of Constance was sitting, and the legates of the Holy See, twenty Cardinals, two hundred bishops, and all the doctors and theologians of the Church were earnestly debating the best means to stem the torrent of corruption that was devastating the Church, Gerson, the Chancellor of the University of Paris, appeared before the fathers, and suggested devotion to Saint Joseph as the only—and the most effectual—remedy for the evil, because, he argued, as Saint Joseph was the guardian of Christ, so is he the guardian of the mystical body of Christ, and he, whom Christ obeyed on earth, still retains an authority of affection over Christ in Heaven, and thus his wishes, like the wishes of Mary, are commands, and his intercession is all-powerful.

His words were received as the words of one who had a mission from Heaven, and as devotion to Saint Joseph spread in the Church, the troubles of

the Church, one by one, disappeared: for less than a year, perfect peace was restored: the distractions of schisms and discussions ceased: and, under the mild patronage of Saint Joseph, the ever-suffering Church had its history of persecution broken by a momentary peace which she seldom, and only at rare intervals, enjoys.

Time went on; and now it was not a passing schism, but the most fearful heresy that desolated the Church: it was not a spark of hell-fire, but an eruption; but devotion to Saint Joseph lived and was fostered in the Church by the greatest of his devoted clients, Saint Teresa; and when the nations of Europe rejected Christ by refuting His Church, the Child and His foster-father passed away into heathen lands, and as at the passing of the Child in His father's arms into Egypt, the idols trembled and fell, so heathenism disappeared where Jesus and Joseph were preached by their priests, and whole kingdoms were evangelized and won over to God.

"The contemplative," says Father Faber, "took up the devotion, and fed upon it: the active laid hold of it, and nursed the sick, and fed the hungry in its name. The working people fastened upon it: for both the Saint and the devotion were of them. The young were drawn to it, and it made them pure; the aged rested on it, for it made them peaceful. Saint Sulpice took it up, and it became the spirit of the secular clergy; and when the great Society of Jesus had taken refuge in the Sacred Heart, and the Fathers of the Sacred Heart were keeping their lamps burning ready for the resurrection of the Society, devotion to Saint Joseph

was their stay and consolation, and they cast the seed of a new devotion to the Heart of Joseph which will one day flourish and abound.

"So it gathered into itself orders and congregations and high and low, young and old, ecclesiastical and lay, schools and confraternities, hospitals, orphanages, and penitentiaries, everywhere holding up Jesus, everywhere hand in hand with Mary, everywhere the refreshing shadow of the Eternal Father.

"Then when it had filled Europe with its odor, it went over the Atlantic, plunged into the damp umbrage of the backwoods, embraced all Canada, became a mighty missionary power, and tens of thousands of savages filled the forests and the rolling prairies at sun-down with hymns to Saint Joseph, the praises of the Foster-Father of Our Lord."

Such is a brief outline of the history of this wonderful devotion. And such is the way that God has chosen to recompense the protector of Jesus and Mary!! The hidden life of Nazareth is changed for the glory of Heaven, and the worship of God's Church upon earth. The meek and lowly Joseph is Patron of the Universal Church.

So deep was his humility upon earth that he seems to us to have been no more than the unconscious agent of the miracles of Heaven: and he little knew that for the fulfillment of the high functions God had entrusted to him his soul had been filled with transcendent virtue: and that in after ages learned doctors of the Church would study eagerly his life and his character, knowing well that in both they would discover traces of the

spiritual omnipotent work of the Holy Spirit. He must have been completely unconscious of his sanctity during life: and now we have saints far advanced in the spiritual life sitting at his feet to learn sanctity, for they know that he who on earth and in Heaven is nearest to Christ is likest unto Christ, and that to be like unto Joseph is also to be like unto Jesus.

Who was more humble? more hidden than the carpenter of Nazareth? Yet behold the great wisdom of the Church does not separate him in glory from those with whom he was associated in misery. But throughout the Church devotion to Saint Joseph is spreading, laying hold of all hearts, and subduing them, not the hearts of the young, or the poor and the lowly, whose life is like to his, but even saints, as I have said, are happy to bring themselves under his sweet influence, and mighty schemes for the sanctification of souls are placed under his protection, and difficult problems are submitted to him for solution, and grave doctors have often appealed to the Foster-Father of Jesus for guidance and assistance.

Among many other traits of character, it is recorded of a great living theologian that, oftentimes when burdened with anxious care, he has been seen to lay his head on the feet of Saint Joseph, as if appealing to the protector of our Divine Lord for light and strength to guard the mystic body of Christ, as Joseph guarded Jesus from His enemies on earth.

And whom shall we take for our model, if not Pius IX? And who is the patron saint of Pius? Saint Joseph. A little time ago, a great artist

was in Rome. He received an order from the Vatican to paint a portrait of the Pope, and a picture of the proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

When an outline of the painting had been made, he took it to the Vatican for the Pope's approbation. Skillful though he was, he had great difficulty in grouping round the Heavenly Throne the many choirs of saints and angels. Throwing a quick glance over the sketch the Holy Father detected an omission. "And Saint Joseph," said he, "where is he?" "I will put him there," said the artist, pointing to a group, lost in clouds of light and glory. "Not so," said the Holy Father, "but," laying his finger on the side of our Divine Lord, "you will put him there, for that is his place in Heaven."

We have been often told that the best way to honor a saint is to imitate the virtues of the saints. I do not know which of Saint Joseph's virtues I should put before you for imitation; but I think it will be appropriate for us to-night to imitate rather the life of Joseph, and to take upon ourselves that responsibility laid by the Eternal Father on Saint Joseph. That is, guardianship of our Divine Lord.

Now in an especial manner Saint Joseph was the guardian of the Divine Infancy. It is only as a child that we ever see Jesus by the side of Joseph —only as an infant does He lie in the arms of Joseph. Now the Blessed Sacrament is the most perfect type of the Infancy of our Lord; for it is in the Blessed Sacrament that Jesus leads that retired, hidden and helpless life that He led as a

Child in Nazareth. Here, then, is this Church transformed into Nazareth, Jesus, as hidden and helpless as there, and we, the Josephs and the Marys, the watchers and protectors of our hidden God.

With what love and reverence did not Joseph guard his treasure. How grateful he felt to God for the great privilege that was extended to him! How often did he look into himself, asking his humility why he had been chosen out of thousands! With what looks of tender love did he not gaze upon the face of the Divine Child.

And this untiringly. From the moment he saw Jesus lying in the arms of His Mother in Bethlehem till Jesus closed his eyes on earth, and opened them to the Beatific Vision in Heaven, never did Joseph relax his care, never for an instant did his love grow cold, never did his interest wane, never did his reverence for Jesus abate.

These must be our feelings, too, in the day and in the watches of the night. The same treasure is confided to us, that was confided to Joseph. Let our love be as great, let our diligence be as unremitting! It was the life-long labor of Joseph, and he did not weary of it, because it was a labor of love to him. The years of infancy, the years of boyhood, the years of riper life went by! but Joseph was unwearied.

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A Golden Century[1]

And we asked the ancients and said: "Who hath given you authority to build this house and to repair these walls?" And they answered us saying: "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth; and we are building a temple that was built these many years ago, and which a great king of Israel built and set up."—Esdras V., 10. 11.

When a preacher in the Eternal City speaks of the never-ceasing flow of the river of time he says not "as the years go by," but "as the centuries go by," thus marking vast periods of time as alone worthy to be computed in that great world-metropolis, whose existence seems to be commensurate with the existence of time itself. Somehow, in this ancient land of ours, on which time and the hand of man seem to have made but little impression, there is also a temptation to measure out the progress of the hours in larger strips and sections than is the wont of historians; and so to-day we stand and pause, closing a century of such work as annalist has never recorded; work, which will find no place in the archives of statesmen and kings; work, which no statist can compute, which no economist can measure, but work which is written on scrolls that will outlast the final fires, in which all meaner history will be scorched and shriveled, when man and his boast-

[1] Preached at the centenary of the Presentation Convent, Kilkenny, Sept. 25, 1900.

ings will have passed away, and eternal silence will have come down upon this planet—the little theater of his pomps and follies. Yes, dearly-beloved, a century has gone by, since this Convent was founded by two young Irish girls, who braved the penalism of the wrath of men to do what they knew was God's Will. A century has gone, compressing within its pages the Act of Union that has split hopelessly asunder the two races, and given a hopeless and insoluble problem to statesmen for all time; the tremendous cataclysm of the Napoleonic wars that tore Europe asunder for fifteen years; the Declaration of American Independence, and the steady march of a mighty nation to freedom and empire; hysterical revolutions in France; the robbery of the Papal States; the civil war in America; and all the material splendors that have accompanied the triumphal chariot of modern progress. But all these pages of blood will have disappeared when, like certain records, written in invisible ink, the hidden history of this and similar communities will gleam forth under the fires of the Last Judgment, and the light that shall stream forth from the face of Him, who, Man Himself, is appointed the final Judge of the living and the dead.

Why, then, do we anticipate that mighty and unerring judgment by dragging forth into the light the hidden splendors of a century of self-sacrifice and enduring work? Why parade before the eyes of men, who wonder, and gape, and forget, the secrets that should be known only to the King Himself? Ah, if a little pomp, and pride, and flattery were the object of to-day's celebration I

should not be here. But I am here, most willingly and joyfully, to ask you to pause and stand still for a moment; and cast your eyes backward over these hundred years of toil and labor and suffering; that seeing all this you may glorify your Father who is in heaven, that you may bend down and adore that Divine Original, who, even in this hideous and barren century, is able to produce in hundreds of pious and plastic souls His own Sacred Image; that you may love your Mother Church that can always bring forth generation after generation of gifted and holy children; and that you may know, and it is a lesson that needs remembering in these unhallowed days, that the Spirit of God is neither dead nor sleepeth; but that to-day, as on the day of Pentecost, He comes with His sevenfold gifts to animate and vivify, strengthen and illuminate those whom He has chosen for His mighty work.

Listen to the brief history. The details are few. Because they are so few, they are sublime and pathetic beyond expression. Just before the time that this poor land of ours was thrown into the convulsions of '98; and when, in a neighboring county, the people, maddened by persecution, were silently preparing to show the world another of its sublime examples of unparalleled heroism, a Spanish gentleman, a descendant of those exiles whom misrule had expelled from their own country, was laying silently the foundations of a noble and enduring work. Mr. Hoyne (his name should be written in letters of gold, came to the Bishop of Ossory, Dr. Lanigan, and placed in his hands a large sum of money for the purpose of promoting

education amongst the female children of Kilkenny. But the most worthless thing in the world is gold when you have to lock it up in coffers and cannot submit it to the divine alchemy of religion. And the good bishop was embarrassed. Just then, however, God came to his assistance through the heroism of a young girl. A Miss McLoughlin came to the bishop and offered herself and her life, as helpers in the glorious work that had been so faintly suggested. She was accepted. And then, as is usual in this land of enthusiasm and sacrifice, the divine contagion spread. And in a few days, Miss Catherine Meighan joined her sister postulant, and declared herself ready for the sacrifice. Both are now sleeping outside in the convent cemetery; for seventy or eighty years they have lain with folded arms under the shadow of their mighty work.

It is strange that my voice should be calling out their names here in this great Cathedral, calling them out from the silence of eternity, and bidding you to love and reverence them. If I dared to speak here to you of the world's heroes of that time, if I dared to preach a panegyric on Bonaparte or Wellington, on Pitt or Castlereagh, you would rise up and protest against it as a profanation and a sacrilege. But, through the gloom and sorrow of a century of Irish history, and through the sealed sepulchers of the dead, I can call on the sanctified spirits of Sister Mary Joseph and Sister Mary de Sales, and I can send their hallowed names echoing around this Cathedral to evoke a corresponding echo in your heart, and you will say: It is right! It is right! It is the meed

of a deserving immortality of honor and reverence to the secret sanctity and the noble work of two consecrated lives. Aye! and perhaps my feeble voice may be heard in the halls of eternity, and that the mighty spirits who worship before the throne of the Most High will seize on another of the mighty motives that for ever elicit their outburst of adoration and praise: "Thou art wonderful, O Lord, in Thy saints."

At this time that noble woman, Nano Nagle, had founded her convents in Cork, and thither the young postulants went; and there, after the term of their probation, they pronounced their vows on June 25th, 1800, and thence they were at once summoned to take up the work of their Order and the work of God in their native diocese. It was no easy task. The penal laws were in full force. The bishop could not, dare not, purchase a house as a Convent. And again a Catholic layman, came to his assistance, Mr. Michael Murphy, a Dublin merchant, at once came forward, and, braving all penalties and disabilities, purchased the house in James Street which formed the nucleus of the Presentation Convent of to-day. Imagine now these two young girls setting out from the holy seclusion of their mother-house in Cork, and traveling day and night on one of the coaches that plied between Cork and Dublin in these far-off times. But they had to put aside the glorious habit they had just assumed—their bridal dress that marked their espousals with Christ, and they had to put on again, probably with laughter and weeping, for such is our Irish character, the secular dress which they had thought was abandoned

for ever. But the habit does not make the monk: and these two holy ones did try, in all the distractions of that novel journey, to keep the secret of the King. And so at the inns and halting-places, in the frosty night and the heat of the day, surrounded by a motley crowd of the curious and the irreverent, they strove to keep their rule and to say their daily office, and to keep themselves altogether unspotted from the world around them. And on this day, September 25th, 1800, exactly one hundred years ago—a memorable day in the annals of your city, so full of memories—they stepped from the coach and buried themselves once more in the seclusion of their convent, there to fulfill, by prayer and deed, the solemn vows they had made to the Most High.

But that secular habit was irksome—they yearned for the distinctive dress of their sacred order and character. And then, after much deliberation and prayer, and probably with some trembling and affright, these two lawless and undisciplined religious did a desperate thing. They put off the garments of the world they had disowned and despised and put on the garments of Christ. Yes! history records it. Verily and indeed, like so many of their fellow-countrymen from time to time in the long, chequered history of Ireland, these two young nuns did, in the seclusion of the cloister, put on the religious habit again. It was an open act of rebellion—a defiance of the omnipotence of the State. "What?" some one exclaims. "Do you mean to tell us that people were not allowed to dress as they pleased even in their own homes?" Quite so! it was a penal of-

fense. They might have dressed as charlatans and mountebanks in all the colors of the rainbow; but British law said that they should not clothe themselves in veil or habit or choir-cloak; and if they dared disobey they subjected themselves to hideous penalties. It seems a little thing in the far perspective of history; but, you must know, it was a perilous thing then. And it was an act of heroism, quite fit to place side by side with that of the martyrs who refused to put the pinch of incense into the thuribles that smoked before the marble gods of ancient Rome, or the virgin who told the wondering prætors: "I am the spouse of Jesus Christ; with His ring hath He espoused me, and I know no other than Him." And we may be sure that for many months these young sisters trembled in the midst of their heroism, and started at every knock at the convent gates, not knowing but that the officers of the law were waiting to drag them, as rebels and traitors, before the tribunals of the land. I believe that hideous law is even yet on the statute books of England. And then commenced the career of hidden work and usefulness, of pieties unrecorded and charity unblazoned, which has been continued with ever-increasing fruitfulness even to our time. Yes, the mustard seed has now grown to a mighty tree, whose branches overshadow half the earth, but it was a mustard seed hidden with some fear and doubt in the rich soil of a faithful and devoted people. The schools were opened. Sixty pupils attended. They came in their rags and poverty, with bare feet and hungry mouths; but hungering even more in their hearts, where the living spark of Faith

burned brightly, for the instruction and knowledge that would lead them more closely to God. They came with round, wondering, wistful eyes, to stare at these new angels of mercy who had suddenly dropped in their midst. And they told the wonderful story to others, and they came; and to others, and they came. And the seed grew, and the numbers became so great that additional buildings had to be procured; and the material convent developed into what it is to-day, and has sent out no less than eleven offshoots, which in turn have taken root and thriven. During the lifetime of the foundress, who died in 1838, no less than sixty-six postulants were admitted. Some passed out and founded filiations in other places, which in turn sent back their spiritual daughters to the mother-house; some labored into old age; some died in the very first flower and bloom of a sanctified youth. The very first sister that was professed in this house died the second year of her Profession. Such is God's will! "The one shall be taken; and another left." One shall be called to her reward at once, exchanging her profession veil for the coif of death, and that again for the crown of immortality; another has to labor for many years, and fight with ignorance, and sin, and suffering; another must bear with shattered health, and broken nerves, during the long years of her pilgrimage; and again, another must bear the burdens of administration, and the heavy load of serious responsibilities. Happy are they who die young, and fly to the peace that sleeps in the bosom of God! Ay! rather happy are they, who never think of the reward, but are content to do

God's will in the storm and sunshine; and whose life-motto is: God's will be done on earth, as the Angels and Saints do it in Heaven!

But, before we send back to the peace of eternity these two choice souls, Sister Mary Joseph and Sister Mary de Sales, one other fact in the history of the infant Institute is worth recording. We have seen how those two young architects were unwilling to labor but in their own working-dress; and that they did actually defy the omnipotence of England to secure that privilege. It is consoling to know that they were not obliged to push their rebellion further; for they did get a license to live, and even to open a school. The historical document is still extant, signed by Dr. Hamilton, Protestant Bishop of Ossory, and in it we read that "permission is graciously given to a certain Isabella McLoughlin to open and keep a school in James Street for the sole use of Papist children." Hear it, ye heavens, and give ear, O earth. The profession vows, solemnly signed in Cork Presentation Convent, and binding Isabella McLoughlin, in the name of Christ, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to instruct the ignorant, had to be *viséd* and countersigned by the Protestant Bishop of Ossory. Was there ever such a comedy? Only one thing remains to complete it. I do not read, as I have read in the case of some of my own predecessors, that security was required for their good behavior; and that one was obliged in a fine of £50 to guarantee their good conduct, is a sign that men were waking up a little from the hideous nightmare of bigotry and persecution. Did I say a comedy? Yes, but a divine

comedy, with its Heaven, and Purgatory and Hell. No wonder that Irish history is strictly interdicted in Irish schools! If circumstances like these were recorded the very stones in the walls would cry out.

And now who shall calculate the vast, silent work wrought by this humble community during these hundred years? For, mark you, work like this must be calculated on the lines of geometrical progression. It is work that cannot stand still, but goes on fructifying a hundred-fold. How many beautiful Christian households sprang from these schools when young girls went forth in all the fervor of faith and piety, and established in your own midst those Christian families whose love and religion reigned side by side, and where the flower and the fruit of Catholic teaching were shown forth in the strong faithful husband and the tender and devoted children! How the soul of that great Frenchman, Chateaubriand, would exult over the realization of this Christian ideal; for what he deemed but a possibility has been here brought forth as a bright reality consummated with all the perfection of Christian workmanship! How many children passed from those schools in the middle of our century—passed out over the ocean to America, Australia, England, dispossessed of all things except the priceless pearl of Divine Faith enshrined in the caskets of bodies that were never polluted by the impurities of the world! And how they throve and spread themselves abroad over the new lands, in the hearts of mighty cities, on the huts of lonely prairies, in the great lumber sheds of Canada, on

the cities of the Pacific slope, and there, surrounded by every temptation that could imperil their virtue or their faith, they kept alive the living spark, as the Israelites burned the sacred fire in the days of the Captivity; and through the divine medium of lives of consecrated virginity, or through the less divine privileges of Christian maternity, passed on the sacred spark to generation after generation of the world-builders and world-teachers of the Irish race. Yes; forth from these schools went child after child, heirs of the mighty mission, inheritors of the monastic vocation of the Irish race.

Nuns for the Orders of Mercy and the Presentation, with lives devoted to education of the poor and the nursing of the sick; Trappist Nuns, who bury themselves in their convents and propitiate the anger of God on a sinful world by fasting, and austerities, and prayers; Carmelites, who maintain by their fervor the sacred traditions of four thousand years; Nuns of the Sacred Heart, who give themselves to the laborious training of girlhood and womanhood—all, all, spring from the Divine fecundity of the great Mother Church of Christian peoples, went forth from this seclusion—all, with one purpose in their lives, to promote God's glory; all with one hope in their hearts, to be deemed worthy to work and suffer; all, with one sacred aspiration, that their work might be blessed of God; and all with one supreme source of strength and light: the everlasting presence and the never-failing love of Jesus Christ. And to-day many a child of the Presentation Convent of Kilkenny will turn her face, bathed with tears of

gratitude and love, towards this, the home of early associations. From the cell of the Trappist and the choir-stall of the Carmelite, from the school and from the bedside of the sick, from every place that is a theater of suffering and love, many a tear-brimmed eye will turn; and many a Sister revolving in her mind the events of the past, will see in the hallowed light of memory faces that have long since paled in death to be renewed in the larger beauty of Heaven, and will recall every little word and caress, every encouragement and admonition, that made smooth the rugged ways of life. And perhaps it is no violent strain on the imagination to suppose that to-day also from English manufacturing cities as well as from lonely villages of Ireland, from stately homes in New York or Chicago, and even from the great cities that are springing up beneath the Southern Cross, many a child of this Convent turns in fancy to the place and preceptress of her youth; and perhaps tells her little children that there is a certain island in the winter seas the home of saints and heroes; that though always wrapped in mists and misery, the face of God is always shining there; and that there is one spot more endeared than the rest by the hallowed associations of childhood, and that is the schoolroom and the chapel, and the playground, where the morning of life, all sunshine and no shadow, was spent.

And even outsiders join in our chorus of jubilation to-day, and from the mother-house in Cork, whence this great institution sprang, and from all the sister-foundations in the kingdom, comes a chorus of congratulation on the past, greetings

for the present, and large, prophetic hopes for the future! The future! Ah me, how much is embodied in that dread word! And what a mercy it is that we do not see the tremendous evolutions that lie before us in a century which will probably be marked by excessive energies uncontrolled by restraining moral force. We, too, have to work in the dark as to results, our labors unlighted save by that Lamp of all righteousness and justice—the will of God. Yet we are justified in trying to forecast that future by watching the elements that are shifting around us, agitated by soulless energies, and potential for good or ill, according to their direction and limitation.

Already in our schools new schemes are in progress for the development of our children's minds —schemes that seem to imply the discovery that the human intellect may be not only a museum for dried-up facts, but also a grinding and moving factor in the development of other physical and mental faculties. The artistic and other powers hitherto latent are about to be developed, and education is taking a wider, a more liberal, and a more rational scope. With all this we must be in perfect sympathy, as with everything that makes for human progress and enlightenment, and for the raising of the standard of human comfort and happiness. And our sympathies must be all the more keen because these new ideas seem to be directed towards the solution of that stupendous problem which dwarfs all other problems at present in Ireland—namely, the conservation of our race here in our own motherland, and, with it, the preservation of all the sacred religious and na-

tional traditions that have come down to us through seven centuries of martyrdom and heroism.

With all the departmental labors, therefore, of educationalists, statists, statesmen, and others that are directed to the amelioration of the young and rising generation, we are in cordial and perfect sympathy. Yet, we must never forget that we, too, priests, nuns, and laity, have a department which is exclusively our own, and in which we may work without hindrance or interference from external sources. That work is to maintain the moral and religious ideals that have ever been before our race. By all means let us make our young people as plastic and cunning with eye and hand as we can. There is no inconsistency between faultless manual workmanship and a high moral character. That is proved by the bygone history of our people, who wrought in cell and church the most beautiful things in gold and copper and scroll and manuscript, and then praised God for the gift. And it would be the perfection and consummation of all education, mental and manual, if our children's minds could be lifted up to see that while performing work that is exquisite in detail and conception they were only imitative of that superior wisdom that is manifested in the instinct of the humblest insect as well as in the conservation of the worlds of space.

Yes, man, too, is a plastic animal, and is in miniature a reflection of the mind of Omniscience itself. But there is something more. He is also a moral being, and if he is akin to the lower creation by reason and instinct he is the brother of the

immortals by moral and religious aspirations. And he is only a poor, unformed, half-developed thing if he is wanting in moral and religious force. Hence the success of the future must be measured by more than material progress. It is thus we have calculated the success of the past. If I were to ask any Sister of this great convent, past or present, whether the little children, confided by the Most High to her care, were successful in life, what answer should I receive? Would any Sister look me in the face and say: "Yes, our children have been great successes in life; one married a multimillionaire in New York, but she apostatized and lost her religion with her name, and her children are non-Catholic to-day; another passed on to the stage and became a celebrity, but we never speak of her; and yet another reached to opulence and honor, but she has come to despise her people and her faith"? Would not these good Sisters rather say: "Yes, Father, our children have succeeded in life; here in Kilkenny they are the happy wives of Catholic shopkeepers, decent artisans, and simple, faithful, honest laborers, and their little children fill our schools to-day, and here are the same faces, the same bright intelligence, and the same Irish hearts that we knew of yore; or, our girls have passed into the mercantile establishments of Dublin, into the postal and telegraph departments, but every one of them is as good, as virtuous, and as pious as when they left our convent school; and others, called higher, are to-day filling Irish convents with holy and devoted subjects; and many are teaching in England, and many have gone out after the exiled race, and are

keeping alive the faith of St. Patrick from Labrador to California, and from the golden gates to the spacious cities of Australia''? Yes, that is what we expect to hear.

Let the future, therefore, be guided by the past —the future with all its tremendous possibilities and all its personal problems for body and soul. Vast issues are before us—social, political, and religious; but it is no exaggeration to say that the problem of raising up even to a higher place the womanhood of our race, our glory and our help, is the greatest of all. In other lands the influence of woman has evaporated. Why? Because she has sacrificed her dignity, and stepped down from her lofty position. Here her influence is stronger than ever, because here is the strength of purity, its chastening and controlling influence is acknowledged and felt. And, therefore, they who have in their hands the formation of the character of our womanhood hold in their hands the destinies of the race. Behold, therefore, Sisters of the Presentation Convent, Kilkenny; behold your honor and your responsibilities. To you, for a hundred years, has been confided the moral and intellectual cultivation of the womanhood of this ancient city. To-day, looking back over that century of toil and suffering, we can say, with all the candor of criticism, as well as all the warmth of affection, well done! There is not one in this vast congregation, from your revered Bishop, your father and your friend, down to the humblest man or woman, who is not prepared to verify and endorse every word that I have spoken in your praise, and the verdict of your people is that su-

preme verdict which was passed by His people to Him who is our Exemplar and Divine Model! "They have done all things well."

But such a verdict entails continued work and sacrifice. Keep, then, ever before you and your sacred charges the supreme ideals of our creed and race. You have to discredit the Gospel of the world. Teach the Gospel of Christ. You have to warn against perverted ideas and degrading conceptions of girlhood and womanhood. Hold aloft the high examples of our great saints. Let Agnes and Perpetua, Rose and Scholastica, our own Brigid and Dympna and Ita, be the models of the young generation that is to be molded by you. And, above all, let the supreme example of our Holy Mother, after whose dedication to the service of the Temple your Order has been named, be ever before the minds of your little children. And let them know that there is a dignity in life quite independent of circumstances; that it is better to be than to have; that in simplicity and purity, in meekness and chastity, lie the supreme consolations of life. That without God life is a burden and earth a hell. When another century shall have rolled by, God alone, to Whom the farthest future is as the present knows how your Order and your work will stand. One thing is certain—that we shall be gathered into eternity, and in its luminous depths we shall know what estimate the Supreme mind will have placed upon our work. May the final and irrevocable judgment on your life-labor be a confirmation of that which has passed to-day on the century of work you have accomplished. May we all hear with bowed heads

and throbbing hearts from the lips of the All-Perfect: "Yes, your life-work is over, and its toil and sacrifice have been accepted, for it is well done." May we be able to say, in the words of my text, when challenged to answer in whose name, and by whose authority, we wrought: "We are the servants of the God of Heaven and earth. It is in His Name and by His authority we have built this Temple and repaired the walls of the City of God."

SERMONS ON MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS

Charity Sermon

Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.'' Math. xxv.—40.

THESE words are the keynote of Christian charity. They contain in simplest form the doctrine of the Church about the nature, the object, and the motives of the highest of Christian virtues. They elevate merely human benevolence into a supernatural virtue with God for its object and eternity for its reward. They raise a capricious or passing sentiment into a well-reasoned and well-founded connection that manifests itself in a steadfast and abiding sympathy with all that suffers and is sorrowful. And they contain the strongest condemnation of a system of thought that prevails very largely in our age, and that would break the golden links that bind God to His poor in charity and mercy, and bind the poor to God in hope and love.

Carry out the words of my text, and what picture do they present? Christ, the Eternal King, on His great white throne in the clouds, with strong angels for His ministers, and the awful power of Nature as His agents, and a Heaven for those that love Him, and the worm and the fire for those who hate Him—claiming a brotherhood with

whom? The lost and outcast children of our race —the conquered, who have gone down in dismal failure on the battle of life, who, clothed in shame and dishonor before men, and consumed by disease, creep along to eternity through the dark places of the earth, for whom I am pleading today.

Such is the picture which presents itself to Christian eyes.

Take away the poor, and your worship of Christ, though it be ecstatic as that of Francis or Catherine, will be barren and unacceptable to Him. Take away Christ, and let your sympathy for the poor be merely human benevolence, and it will be neither worthy in its object, elevated in its motives, catholic in its sympathies, but capricious, changeful, passing from sympathy to hardness of heart. For, alas! when unchastened and unpurified, the human heart leans as easily to cruelty as to charity, to loathing as to love.

And yet there have been men who would build a wall of separation between Christ and His poor; who under very specious arguments would commit the poor to the tender mercies of a hard and selfish world, and destroy their faith in a good and merciful God; who would take away from them the hope of immortality, which to them, even more than the bread that perisheth, is the staff of a weary life; who maintain with their lips the brotherhood of man and deny the Fatherhood of God—who, in a word, try to tear the gentle form of Charity from the side of her elder sister, the wisdom of the Eternal God, revealed to men in the name and under the guise of Religion, and

send her out on her sacred mission under the doubtful guidance of a science that deifies self and a philosophy that preaches pride.

And every day the new doctrine, under specious names and pretexts, is more widely accepted by the world, almost every novel and romance written in our century has advocated it, the most powerful writers of our age have embodied it in their works, sermons in defense of it have been, and are, preached in pulpits that are supposed to be strictly Christian, and you will recognize it when I tell you that it has been raised to the dignity of a religion in our age, and passes under the name of the Religion of Humanity.

"What have we to do," say they, "with your creeds and churches and confessions of faith? Too long have the minds of men been racked by disputes about dogmas, which no one can understand, and controversies about purely intellectual beliefs, which, right or wrong, have no influence for good on the destinies of our race. Leave those vexed questions to scholastic disputants who have no better employment, and face the sad truths, which the eye is pained with seeing. You and your race are moving around from the blackness of one eternity to that of another. From nothing you came: to nothing you are descending. It is a mournful procession. The rich in the trappings of pride and the poor in the livery of sorrow; the strong, lifting their faces to heaven in the exuberance of life, the sickly, craving for their rest in the bosom of earth—but all moving steadily on to the gulf where the future shall reveal no more to them than the past does to us.

We admit that it is all very terrible, and that we take away from the world its fairest hopes and most blessed promises. But we must accept our fate. And, meanwhile, our highest duty is to one another. We take a leaf from the book of Christianity and say, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, lift the fallen, succor the wretched—but we promise you no reward in an eternity that does not exist—neither a Heaven as the guerdon of your love, nor a Hell as a retribution of your neglect."

It must be admitted that all this is specious, particularly where the argument seems to rise above the morality of our Christian dispensation, and appeals to our unselfishness to seek no reward and fear no punishment. But you see it proceeds on the assumption that man is perfect. Sublime charity such as this and complete self-denial could only be expected from a race that had lifted itself from the imperfections of mortals, and clothed itself with the attributes of angels. Until virtue comes to us as easy as vice, until we feel from ourselves that it is more blessed to give than to receive, until men admit, like St. Francis, the beauty of poverty, and the loathsomeness of riches, we cannot see the application of this doctrine.

But if our existences are all to end in common ruin and annihilation, and this short span of life is all that is given us, we shall crowd into it all the happiness we may, and let those whose fate it is to be poor and to suffer bear their sad lot as best they may. Their troubles will end as speedily as our pleasures. We hope that they will have philosophy enough to be patient as their sufferings are so temporary. Our motto shall be:

"Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die."

But the humanitarian again says: "All that is true; but unhappily it is the result of your teaching. It is your doctrine of Heaven and Hell that has made men selfish. Give us an opportunity of upholding our teachings to the world, of preaching the independence and sublimity of our race, and of appealing to the higher instincts that you have destroyed; and in a little time the face of the world will be changed; cruelty, rapine, injustice, in a word, 'man's inhumanity to man,' will be forgotten, and the world will become so humanized that society will know nothing of the hideous social and political evils that now affect it, but gradually grow into a blessed republic of civilization, refinement—of contentment and happiness."

Yes! but was not this religion of humanity preached long before the pure revelations of Christianity? Was there a Greece, whose philosophers are your masters, teaching a high morality, that almost touches the sublimity of Christianity; and where, if not in Greece, that worshiped the perfection of the human form, and the grandeur of human intellect, was your doctrine of the excellence of human nature preached? Yet! was not its wisest man condemned to a violent death, and its most upright citizens to banishment, and was there not a system of helotry in Greece worse than the barbarism of the slave traders on the coast of Africa; and amongst the best and bravest of the Greeks was it not the custom to fling out the weakly and deformed and leave them as a prey to the wild beasts by night? And in Rome was there

not a high civilization, as its ruins testify? Yet who has not heard of the captives that were lashed to the chariots of Roman conquerors, and the holocausts of human victims offered to their gods, and Roman mistresses who punished their slaves by stabbing them, and the Roman amphitheaters, where the sight of blood drove the people to frenzy, and the lust for human sacrifice became so great that no prætor or emperor dare refuse the cries of the populace for "bread and blood."

And if you tell me that all that has been changed, and changed for ever, that broader and more liberal views have taken possession of men's minds, that savage cruelty is no longer possible either in public or private life, let me remind you that if such be the case, you owe it, directly or indirectly, to the influence of the Christianity you affect to despise.

Nineteen centuries of holy teaching have left their impress in the human heart. You cannot undo the work of the ages in a single day. Revolutions are of slow birth; and though we must say that almost preternatural power is at work to undermine Christian charity, its morality has entered so largely into the present composition of human affairs that it will take more potent influences than modern infidelity can supply entirely to eradicate it.

But where men have broken from the Church, it is quite clear that their return to barbarism has begun; and the religion of Humanity is but the dangerous slide by which they will descend into the abysses. Repudiating all doctrine they cannot consistently maintain a code of morality; and even

the very virtue they preach is but a poor and spurious imitation of the divine charity of the Church. It rests on no foundation, either of reason or religion. It is a charity of policy, as when men give largess to the poor in the hope that, like the bread on the running water, it will return after many days. It is a charity of Fashion, as when Vincent de Paul made the fine ladies of the French Court put aside their finery, and, clothing themselves in the sable habit of mourning, go down into the by-streets of Paris, thus averting, at least for a time, that awful "truth clothed in hellfire," which came as a terrible retribution later. Or it may be a charity of fine taste, just as ritualism is a religion of taste; and good people who have no domestic employment put on the dress of a hospital nurse, or of a Sister of Charity, and amuse themselves for a little while in the pleasant fancy that they are doing good. Or lastly, and worst of all, it may be utilitarian charity, which would let the masses live or die as they pleased, which would contentedly let strong men weep, and women fade away, and sucklings perish, were it not that these strong men may be inclined to something else than weeping, and that those who have ears to hear recognize the far-off rumblings of a storm, that has burst before this in a rain of blood.

Recognizing the inevitable collision between poverty and wealth, labor, wages and capital, consumption and production, our utilitarians clamor loudly for bread for the poor. They shall not perish.

In an age of science and progress, when the comforts of the world are daily increased by the

bountiful goodness of Mother Earth, by the cheapness of manufactured goods, by the facility for transport of tropical luxuries to our cold climate —when ordinary men live better than kings of old, it is intolerable that men should want bread, the smallest thing that man can give to man. I have been hearing all this for twenty years; yet what is the practical outcome? The discontent increases; the relation of classes are strained to their utmost tension; the rich cry for more law and the poor for more bread in louder and more agonized accents than ever.

But I shall be told there is some great mistake here. Has not modern philanthropy, grasping every appliance that modern progress can afford, not only created the science of political economy in the interests of the proletariat, but devised a system of poor laws that are perfect and flawless in theory, and covered the land with mendicity institutions, workhouses, hospitals, etc., all built with architectural style, and governed by constitutions that would put Lycurgus to shame? Yes! but somehow the people for whose benefit these institutions are devised prefer the unscientific squalor of their homes; and somehow, too, poverty, and vice, and sickness seem to thrive in the light of the nineteenth century as much as in the darkness of the Middle Ages.

But is there not something, besides philanthropy, in all these modern devices for the check of vice and the prevention of poverty? Apart altogether from the pleasure of speculating on the misfortunes of others, and inventing theories, which cost nothing, and being considered very

learned and scientific, is it not a fact that our civilization is so highly wrought that it will not tolerate poverty—not because of the misery of the poor, but on account of the fastidiousness of the rich? Is it not a fact that we have become so refined by habit and education that the sight of poverty is a mortification which a voluptuous world cannot bear? Fine eyes that are accustomed to rest on dainty pictures and statues, and must even be feasted on landscapes in distant climes, will not bear the sight of deformed features or twisted limbs. Fine hands that play with gold and silver, and toy with jewels, will not soil themselves by touching the sordid rags of the poor. And the slime of the lane and the squalor of the by-street will be studiously shunned by those whose homes are palaces of beauty, and light, and perfume. You may be sure that when Lazarus was obliged to sit and wait at the gate of the rich man it was not so much the importunity of his prayers as the sight of his sores that Dives dreaded. And to-day if the governments of the world seek to gather the poor from the public streets, and to hide the maimed and the decrepit in hospitals, it is not so much to shelter them as to save the senses of the rich. Do you want a proof of this? Go to the streets of any of our modern cities—the streets where Vanity Fair is for ever being held. A beggar asks for alms. He is instantly hustled by the strong hand of the law into prison, lest the sight of him should pain or worry the pleasure seekers. But the same street may be the harem and the home of the moral lepers who bear the sign of Satan on their forehead, and carry

the wages of sin in their hands, and the well-bred and virtuous, high-toned, fastidious world will not utter a single protest.

We turn aside from this Pharisaical heresy to contemplate the high sublimity of Christian teaching. And we go straight to the fountain head for a knowledge that never would have dawned on the human mind if God Himself had not taught it. And His teaching is, that man, whom we have seen in the eyes of unbelievers a ruined and hunted creature, driven by blind fate from nothingness to nothingness, is in reality the child of God, the masterpiece of omnipotence, drawn by God from the darkness of eternity to be immortal in realms of light. And around this darling child, and above him, and on every side of him, the love of his Father is shown. For him the Heavens are daily painted in fresh colors, and the earth is a revelation of new beauties, which change and blend and mingle lest they should weary him. And if we have any doubt about his earthly wants, behold the brown sparrows that nestle under the eaves—who feeds them? And who hath clothed with splendor as of Solomon the lilies that hide in the valleys? "Thou hast made man a little lower than the angels," said David. "They are made equal to angels," said Christ, "because they are the children of God, being the children of the Resurrection." And He came down from Heaven Himself and assumed a human form, that human nature might be lifted up and for ever associated with the Divine. God became man—that man might live with God: the Maker became a Man that the slave might live with the Maker.

But amongst all the children of God, so His Divine Son tells us, there is a class who are specially dear to Him. He hath established amongst men a strange mystery, the "Mystery of pain and suffering," and He hath placed amongst us an Angel called His Angel of Sorrow. And that angel hath built a sanctuary in our midst; and through it it is needful that all should pass, if they would be purified of earthly dross, and made worthy of the high beatitude of Heaven. Of the spiritual results of the ministration of this high angel, He Himself will be the only Judge; but without unfolding to us the meaning of the Mystery, He asks us to acknowledge that sorrow lends to its victim some of the holiness and beauty of Heaven—a nameless peace—a nameless dignity that challenges our admiration and commands our reverence and love. For this reason He Himself became the Man of Sorrows; and so, Jesus in Heaven we worship and fear—Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament we worship and love; but for Jesus, haggard and pale and bloodstained in Gethsemane, and for Jesus, torn and soiled and dying on Calvary, we have a feeling, not so much of fear, nor yet of worship, but of deepest reverence, and holiest awe, and tenderest human sympathy.

Mary, our Mother, too, is at all times very beautiful to us—beautiful as the tender maiden, consecrating her young virginity to God in the Temple—beautiful as the Virgin Mother, bending over her babe at Bethlehem—beautiful in her mother's pride, when men threw their garments at the feet of Christ and shouted Hosannas to their King—but beautiful most of all in that awful hour, when

she passed through the Sanctuary of the Angel of Sorrow, on Calvary, when the dead walked around her and the darkness hung above her—a darkness relieved only by the white body of her dead Son. The sanctity of death had then intensified the love of Mary for Jesus; and the sanctity of sorrow hath made for all time Mary very dear to us.

And so the companions of the life-pilgrimage of Christ were those on whom sorrow hath fallen. Have you not read how He called back to life the widow's son and the ruler's daughter; how the blind shouted at Him from the wayside, and He touched and healed them, and the palsied stretched towards Him their trembling hands, and in His grasp they grew strong and firm. He waited by the well for the sinful Samaritan, and He came in His omnipotence to the lame man who lay by the holy well and expected only the advent of an angel. Sightless eyes were turned towards Him and they saw Him; dumb lips tried to cry to Him, and found speech—nay, when the outcasts who slept amongst the tombs by night, and ate their bread in charnel-houses by day, came forth in their awful misery, and shouted to Him, and stretched towards Him the white horror of leprous limbs, He only saw the sanctity left by the Angel of Sorrow, and cleansed them and sent them on their way in peace.

But there was one class around whom all His love, deep as the sea, boundless as space, was thrown. There was one class to whom the Angel of Sorrow was no passing visitant, bearing for a moment an angry commission from Heaven, to

strike suddenly and strongly, and then to heal and depart; but to whom He is the faithful companion of their life's pilgrimage, steadfast as their Angel Guardian—with them in labor, and with them in leisure—with them when waking, and with them in sleep—with them in youth, and not tiring of their old age—with them when they are in the state of grace, and with them (but, ah! how bitter the companionship) when they have forsaken their only hope, and lost God's friendship and love—ever mingling tears with their bread, and their drink with weeping—bending over their cradles to foreshadow their sufferings, and bending over their deathbeds, perhaps, to prolong their agony.

You know whom I mean. You know the sunken faces for whom hunger is for ever running a race with death: you know well the ragged raiment, the sport of every passing wind; you know the forms ever bent downwards, as if in private entreaty to Mother Earth not to refuse them a last resting-place. They are the "little ones" so very dear to Christ—His poor.

It was not in the high academical halls, or senate houses, or even temples, it was not to the great or gifted, that Christ unfolded the secrets of that sublime philosophy, which was so bold that none but God could have preached it; but it was on the highways, and in the dusty streets, and on lonely mountains, and by the barren seashore, and His audience were the poor, the maimed and the lame, and the blind and the beggar, who clung to Him, and lifted towards Him their wistful faces, and drank every word of that wisdom that lifts them from the lowest to the highest places amongst

men. For the gospel taught by Christ is this—that our highest reverence is due, not any longer to wealth or power or strength, physical or intellectual, but to poverty and to weakness and to suffering.

Did not He, the God of this universe, adopt, elevate, and sanctify the state of poverty, did He not choose a stable for His birthplace, with the beasts of the field for His nurses, and a scaffold for His deathbed with malefactors for His companions; and the lowliest of virgins to be His Mother, and the poorest of artisans to be His reputed father, and rude, weak, illiterate fishermen to be the bearers of His Name, and His mission to the world. No palatial residence has He. "The foxes have their holes, and the birds of Heaven their nests; but the Son of Man has not whereon to lay His head." No purple or fine linen—but one seamless garment which His Mother wove. No sumptuous repasts; a little honey and fried fish were to Him and His disciples a luxury. And in His last agony, when the fever of suffering wrung from Him those words, "I thirst," there was no friend near to give the dying God one drop of water.

The world apparently has not changed very much since then. To the world of that time the Son of God was a "worm and no man," the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. To the world of to-day, the poor, as we have seen, are very much the same. To the world of that time its Redeemer was "despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrow and acquainted with infirmity: one cursed of God, and afflicted"; and the

world, in its selfishness, is very eager to attribute the afflictions of the poor to God's anger, and not to His love. Cursed by God and afflicted. Afflicted! very true, indeed! "Cursed by God!" Not by any means! Nay, rather let us add one other beatitude to the eight, and say: "Blessed are the poor of God, for they are most like to His Son Christ Jesus!"

This likeness of special sanctity between Himself and His poor, our Redeemer invariably recognized. We do not read that by any harsh word or imperious gesture He ever repelled the child of sorrow. It is true that to all He was uniformly mild, "the bruised reed He would not break, and the smoking flax He would not quench," but in His dealings with the poor He seemed to have exhausted all the treasures of His charity, so reverentially and tenderly and benignantly did He treat them. He had but one answer to their plaintive prayers: "What will you that I do unto you," and but one word of farewell: "Go in peace"; and identifying Himself with them to all time He left them as a most precious legacy to His faithful, with a solemn reminder, which to many will sound a threat, but in which you will recognize the promise of a blessing: "Whatever you do to the least of my little ones, that you do unto Me"; and He has declared that kindness for the poor will be the final test of our fitness to be admitted as children of Him, whose mercy is over all His works.

Such is the sublime spectacle which Christian charity presents to us; such is the divine philosophy, beside which human systems of benevolence

are dwarfed and discredited. But when we look on the face of this "Christus Consolator," this God-man, who has become weak for our sakes, we are tempted to ask: "Is all this a reality? Has the world really seen such a spectacle? or is it only some myth, that sprang from the mind of a saint in ecstasy, some shadowy vision that crossed the eyes of the hermit of Patmos, when blended by the effulgence of Heaven?" It is a reality, for behold here in the end of the nineteenth century, here in your city of white terraces, is the very same spectacle reproduced. For the stateliest buildings in your city are temples of charity, with the sign of Christ's redemption crowning them, and the victims of the Angel of Sorrow are within, but their Master, "Christus Consolator," is with them, and with them are their and His brethren preaching and practicing the sublime doctrines which He taught eighteen hundred years ago.

Even in your streets is seen that respect for sorrow, which was His highest teaching. The blind man, with his eyes upturned to the light that never enters them, gropes his way through your streets, and in the most crowded thoroughfares men, however intent on business, will make way for him. It is the reverence due to the afflicted one. In some gay scene, when the laugh and the song and the jest are heard, the black weeds of mourning are suddenly seen, and every tongue is hushed in reverential awe. For the sanctity of death and the sanctity of grief are here.

Here in your city, in the mercenary iron age, when the thirst for gold is drying up the best instincts of human nature, here is a band of lay-mis-

sioners, apostles of charity, who every week close their ledgers, go down from their country-houses, and carry to the poor and distressed bread for perishing bodies and peace for despairing souls. No stars or garters have they, but the Cross of Him "who loved us with an everlasting love." No great titles conferred by earthly princes for deeds of blood or triumphs of diplomacy. But they bear the name of the simple priest to whose cassock starving children clung, and who bore the shame and pain of the galleys to restore a convict to his mother. Their deeds of charity are not heralded with trumpets, but the angels of God accompany them. They know no science but the science that love teaches; and they leave statistics to the Recording Spirits, who will mark them in the Book of Life.

To fill their hands with gifts for Christ's suffering brethren, to enable them to carry out successfully their ministrations, is the object of our appeal to-day. It is not given to all to carry out the injunction of the Apostle, "to visit the fatherless and the widow"; but it is the province and duty of all to see that none of our brethren perish for want of the bread that sustaineth life.

I make the appeal to you not on statistical or scientific grounds. I hope I do not desire to depreciate your culture or advancement, when I say that possibly the theories of Bentham or Mill are mysteries to you, that probably you have never even heard of the name of Ricardo; that the "dismal science" of political economy is a sealed science to you, but you understand me very well when I tell you that I appeal to you in the name

of Christ, and tell you that your charity shall be given to Him, and mentioned by Him, and rewarded by Him. "What you give to the least of My brethren, that you give unto Me." And surely, dear Lord, we want no motive for charity but to show that the request comes from Thee! We do not want to hear at our doors the cry of the starving, or see the white faces that turn to us for bread. We do not want Thy preacher to paint for us the agony of strong men, bound by fiery bands on their fever beds, nor the pale women who try to still the cries of their children for food by the dreadful logic which proves to them that they are not hungry, nor foreheads seared with misery, and faces scarred by disease. Thy own Name is enough. It is as honey in our mouths, and Thy presence is the sunshine of our lives. All that we have is from Thee. And from Thee do we expect everything in this world and in eternity. For we are frail and poor and subject to sorrow. The years that are gliding towards us may be burthened with grief for us. Thy Angel before this has crossed our threshold, and darkened it when departing. He has taken from us one of Thy creatures, whose love was a part of our life, and left the chambers of our hearts dark and empty, which the idols of our affections made bright. And to-day as of old, Thy feet are wet with the tears of women that weep: and strong men, in the pauses of their agony, are fain to creep to Thy temples in the twilight, and lay the burthen of their sorrow near Thy Cross. And so besides the triple relationship of birth, redemption, and destiny, we claim a brotherhood of

sorrow with Thee and Thy poor. For the peace we shall give to them, we ask for the strength to be patient when the day of Thy visitation shall come, for the bread that we bestow on them, we ask for the food that will support us, like the prophet, in our journey to Thy Holy Mountain, and for the alms we shall give, give us the riches of Thy mercy, and the bounty of Thy love. And so the burthen of life shall press lighter on us all, and our bliss in eternity be made sweeter by our memory of common suffering and our mutual love.

On Death

There are very few real philosophers in the world: very few that have the courage to look boldly on certain truths, that are very terrifying, very unpleasant, but which cannot lose their truth nor their reality. The vast majority of men, quite content with the present, do not care to look into the future and if by chance, they are put face to face with one of those unpleasant truths, they shut their eyes to it, and put it away in the distance, where it looks less terrible and real. One of these truths, so well deserving of attention, is Death; that each one of us, at his own appointed time, shall die.

We are so accustomed to the habit of living, if I may so speak, that it is very difficult to imagine this. Life is so natural to us that we cannot believe it ever shall cease. Life sits so easily upon us; we breathe so freely; we are so unconscious that there is any effort required to live; soul and body harmonize so well together, that we cannot by any possibility bring ourselves to think that life shall cease, that there will be a time, perhaps it is close at hand, when this breath that now comes so freely will be thick and hard, and then will come no more: that there will be a time when we shall need an effort to live, and when that struggle will be unavailing, when body and soul that now harmonize so well together will be violently

wrenched asunder, the soul to go we know not where, the body to remain behind and crumble into a little dust.

Yet there is no truth more prominently put before us. The thought that we shall die is suggested to us at every step we take. It is the one sermon that Nature is for ever preaching at us. The lesson is taught us as effectually as if a black bag were for ever borne before us with a skull and cross-bones upon it, and "*Memento Mori,*" "Remember thou shalt die," written upon it.

We read that lesson every hour in the face of Nature, we read it in the cemeteries that are scattered thickly around and in the midst of the city. We read it on the faces of our friends, we read it in ourselves. We are in the midst of death. Death is around us, above us, everywhere. Life itself is Death. We know it, and yet very few believe that they shall die. This day, Sunday, that was born this morning is dying. A few hours, and it will have passed away, with all the other dead days, to be remembered with the dead Past. This year that was born a few months ago is dying. You remember some months ago, how you watched in daily expectation to see the leafless branches put forth their leaves. They did, and the leaves grew and developed, but they are all now dead—trampled yellow and lifeless on the miry road, or lying on the dead leaves of other years in the depths of the woods, and the trees are stripped again and bare as if they had never worn a bud. Every day one or more mournful processions winds through the streets of your city. However gay you are, it suggests for the time

some solemn thought. A few black coaches, a weeping woman, perhaps some children that are puzzled to know what it all means: but you do not think about them: you think only that there is "something" hidden away under pall and plume, and that those women and children are going to hide that "something," outside the city, deep under ground, that men's eyes may not look upon it any more.

Within us, too, death is busy. Every day we die, not only because every day we approach nearer the ends of our lives, but because every day there is going on within us a decay that is a kind of slow death. Every breath we breathe makes a demand upon our vital powers, and decreases their strength: every exertion we make is so much strength that is spent; we are tired, hungry, thirsty—it is a slow death, a decay that is going on within us, and we have recourse to such artificial means as sleep, food, and drink, to stop that decay, and renew our exhausted powers.

There are few of us, too, that have not a friend in the world of spirits. A friend that lived and breathed and walked amongst men, but some one day he grew deaf and dumb and lifeless, and men removed him from among them—and he became invisible to us, and it was all explained by saying that he was dead. And thus this sermon upon death is for ever dinned into our ears; yet how few have an active faith or belief in it—how very few live as if they were to die.

Nevertheless, however little men think of it, it is the most important act of our lives. Upon that one act a whole eternity hinges. Every act of our

lives leads up to it. Death is such a solemn, dreadful thing, it is wrapped in so much mystery, that the wonder is how men can ever cease to think of it. How can the thought ever die from the minds of men, that they will all be called upon to make a change, of whose nature no man knows anything, whose consequences we ourselves must determine.

In a very short time, I will have to leave the world of men. I, who think no pains too great to win the esteem of men, will be withdrawn from their midst, and hurried away from amongst them and hidden. I shall no longer hear the human voice, nor see a human face, or touch a human hand, and the world will go on just as if I had never existed. Perhaps, if I have friends, for a little time my name will linger on their lips, but that, too, will be very soon forgotten. There will be for a day or two a passion of tears and some sorrow: but both will speedily evaporate: and however passionate the weeping be, it is not for me.

The purest grief is the purest selfishness. It is not for me my friends are weeping. If any one ask them they will say, "Yes! he is happy: he is in Heaven," and to spare themselves they will believe it, and canonize me summarily in order to spare themselves the trouble of asking God to have mercy upon me. They ignore all Catholic truths, they will persuade themselves that I with my many imperfections have been admitted before the all-pure God without having been touched by the purifying flames of Purgatory: that belief that I am a saint exonerates them from the obligation of ever thinking about me. They are not weep-

ing for me, they are weeping for having lost me. Their way of life has been rudely broken into: the little attachment to me has been rudely severed: they miss my companionship: there is a feeling of loneliness: and they weep, for weeping is a luxury; to be regarded as objects of sympathy is a luxury.

To go to your grave on a Sunday and lay souvenirs of undying flowers upon it is a luxury; but whether you are in Heaven or Hell or plunged in the terrible but saving fires of Purgatory is a matter of perfect indifference to your friends. "Have pity on me, at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me." Poor Soul! You are ungrateful and troublesome! Have not your friends gone into mourning for you, and is there not a yellow chaplet on the cross above your grave?

And all the time that likeness to me in clay that was carried out and buried has gone through its stages of decomposition. It has put out its green mold, and the green mold has become a tangled heap of living, writhing worms, and the worms have eaten and been eaten, leaving me a skeleton, and the skeleton lay crumbled into dust, and if you dig into that grave, where a little time hence they laid me, you will see only the same red mold that you saw on the surface—nothing to distinguish it—nothing that can be identified, nothing to prove that I was ever laid there.

But let us go back to the death-bed, and through the eyes of the dying man let us look at those solemn truths that are very vague and unimpressive to us, and were once very vague and unim-

pressive to him, but which he now sees in all their terrible reality and significance.

It is strange that it is only on our death-beds we see things as they really are. During life we live in a region of romance and imagination, but at the hour of Death a light is let in upon our souls, a glimmering of eternity, and there is revealed to us for the first time the meaning of Life and Death, and Time and Eternity, and Heaven and Hell and Sin. To one walking in the darkness of midnight every object is indistinct and shadowy, and the only lights we see are deceptive, flickering over fens and morasses; the dawn appears, and gives to things an outline and a color for pleasure or for pain, and the wandering lights have vanished and we tremble to think into what a terrible death they would have lured us had we followed them.

Life is that midnight darkness, and Death is the dawn of eternity, and before that dawn all the specters of the night disappear, and in that dawn are revealed the truths of God and Eternity, and all the voices of the night die hushed, and the words, wealth and fame and honor, cease to have a meaning; and from the heart of every dying man as well as from the heart of that all-wise king that became a fool is wrung that bitter verdict on all things human, "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity."

Here is one that moves in the highest circles of society; he is honored, flattered, caressed: he has every pleasure that wealth can buy, every advantage that wealth can afford: his name is in the mouths of men, he prides himself upon his wealth:

he thinks no pains too great to secure and preserve his good fame. He is seized with a mortal illness: in a moment his estimate of all those things is changed: his wealth lies useless around him—all the gold of California will not buy for him one instant of time. Honor! Well, it is true that there is an obscure paragraph in an obscure country paper, intimating with many other things that he is ill, and perhaps a friend inquires and then hastens about his buying and selling; but the world goes on as usual, and the living stream passes and repasses his door, giving no more thought to the honored man that is dying than to the poor pauper that is breathing his last on the little straw in the parish workhouse.

Poor, naked, companionless, alone, honored by men, and very likely dishonored of God, he stands at the door of eternity. Thus far he has been accompanied by his flattering friends: they remind him of what a respectable career he has run—he is afraid it will not be appreciated in eternity: they speak to him words of hope and bid him remember his many virtues. He cannot remember, and perhaps in his despair he tells them fiercely that they lie; and the last that he sees of them is when he is gliding under the portal of Death, and they retreat with his money and a sigh of relief, and he stands helpless and alone under the angry, searching eye of God.

But on the little straw in the parish workhouse lies another whose life has been very different. Let us see what the light of his death-bed, the dawn of his eternity, reveals to him. Poor, neglected, shunned, despised, the outcast of civiliza-

tion—the sands of his life have run out; and what does life appear to him to have been: the sport of the one long sorrow, one long affliction—but it is all past. Never did the eye of man rest on him but in scorn. What matters it? He will see men no more. Never were men's lips moved about him but in contempt. Well, the pain was bitter at the time, but it was transitory, like everything human, and he has long since ceased to think of it. He remembers how when he passed through the streets, men shunned him, and drew their immaculate garments tighter around them, lest they should be contaminated by him, as he went by shivering in his rags. All that, too, is passed, and he thinks of One that he has sometimes heard of, in Whose eyes poverty is no crime, and if that poverty has been borne well, borne out of submission to the Divine Will, borne with pleasure and pride, because it was the state which Jesus Christ chose on earth: and if all those censures and reproaches of the world have been incurred out of obedience to God's law, through contempt of the world, in the light of eternity all those afflictions will appear to have been merciful dispensations on the part of God, and that now is fulfilled for him the promise of the Beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that suffer persecutions for justice sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

But there is one thing of which even saints know little, until the moment of death, and that is sin. There are many in the world, thank God, in whom grace combined with the habit of meditation on divine truths has produced such a holy sensi-

bility that the very name of sin is to them an inexpressible horror. They shudder at the very thought of it; and to say that they would die a thousand deaths rather than offend Almighty God is but a feeble way to express their intense loathing and detestation of anything bearing the appearance of sin. But even to these, sin is not revealed in all its horrors until the moment of death. It is only when they are about to come face to face with the all-holy, all-pure God, that they understand what it is to have offended him.

The many acts of their lives that appeared to them not only blameless, but praiseworthy, are now seen to have been worthless, and perhaps sinful. Those prayers which they flattered themselves were perfect, and that could not fail to call down God's grace, are now seen to have been full of imperfections—either the object of their prayers was unworthy of a Christian, or the motives were sinful, or their confidence was weak and wavering. The many confessions, too, are remembered only to suggest doubts as to whether absolution was ever validly received. The many communions are remembered to create the bitterest remorse at the thought, how feebly were the preparations made to receive Our Divine Lord, how languid and cold and indifferent was the reception of Him, how hasty and almost irreverent were the thanksgivings after communion and how tiresome was felt to be the presence of that God, whom it is our hope to enjoy for eternity.

Yet if the remembrance of those sins, which perhaps are only venial, is so bitter to the dying saint, what a perfect hell of remorse must not the re-

membrance of sin be to the dying sinner. You go about the world now: your load of sins lies easy upon you: you had very little scruple about committing, and you think they are forgotten, and that the Past has buried its own dead. Not one of them is forgotten even by ourselves, and at the hour of death your memory will recall them—the least as well as the greatest, you will then understand their fearful enormity, and foreseeing the punishment that each one of them brings with it, you will have on your death-bed a foretaste of that punishment of Hell, the full horrors of which you are soon to experience.

They lie very lightly upon you now; you scarcely feel their weight: perhaps you even think that bad habit a pleasant companion: but you will have no need of an accusing angel at the bars of Divine Justice; every one of your sins will stand out revealed to you, to devils and angels, in all its hideousness, and your greatest punishment for eternity will be that you can never rid yourself of them never divorce yourself from them—they will abide with you to increase your remorse, to suggest to you the hopelessness of pardon, to bid you for ever despair, to bring upon you the taunts of demons, for they will be the badge of your eternal shame, and the source of eternal sorrow.

Yet it is now in your power to divorce yourself from them finally—to banish them that they may never more return. And which of the two is easier? To accuse yourself of those sins now in the presence of God who is disposed to be merciful to you, and in the presence of God's minister, who, you know, has no feeling for you, however

black your sins may be, but one of Christian sympathy and charity—or to wait till your death-bed, when there is no more hope for you, when the season of mercy is past and God's justice is about to smite you, and perhaps there will be no priest by to whisper to you one word of consolation, and alleviate the misery of your despair. No one knows better than I what God's mercy is—how inexhaustible—how long-suffering—but I tell you emphatically there is no mercy for a soul that trifles with God's mercy, and makes it an excuse to continue in sin. A happy death-bed never yet succeeded a life of sin, and to any one conscious to himself to-night of mortal sin there can be but one advice given: "Do not trust God, even till to-morrow."

We have just seen, then, that life is a shadow: that death is the only reality for a Christian—that, therefore, a happy death ought to be the object of all our hopes, our desires, and, most of all, of our prayers. For a happy death is the pure, gratuitous gift of God: we cannot merit it; a life however holy is no absolute security of a holy death.

That great final grace is the pure gift of God's mercy: and like every other gift it is only given to fervent, persevering prayer, and when you recollect that a happy death is everything, that if we die in God's grace, everything is gained; if we die in enmity with Him everything is lost: surely there is no need to exhort you to weary Heaven with prayer, that God would preserve you during life in His grace, and take you out of life, while you are yet in His friendship.

We have friends, too, in Heaven whom it would be well to interest in our favor. This earth saw two deaths: one of them was supremely happy, the other supremely sorrowful. The eyes of the chaste, sinless Joseph were closed by the hands of Jesus, and Mary was kneeling at his side. His death was supremely happy; he is, therefore, the patron of a happy death-bed. I may add that a saint has told that the efficacy of his intercession is only second to that of Mary.

The other death was supremely sorrowful; and the same sword that pierced Jesus pierced the Mother of Sorrows that stood by the foot of the Cross. Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, is again the patron of a happy death.

I said a little time ago that not one of our sins is forgotten on our death-bed. For our consolation let it be said that the same is true of our prayers. Every prayer to Mary buys its own grace, but grace is invisible to us. It will not be so at the hour of death. And when the cross, the emblem of our crucified hope and salvation, is put into our hands, she that stood at the foot of the Cross will be there, to show us how each little prayer to her, each rosary even carelessly said, each communion offered in her honor, is accompanied by a corresponding grace. And there, too, in the hands of our Mother will be the final crowning grace of a happy death, if we ask it of her faithfully and perseveringly during life.

Hearing the Word of God

The experience of each one of us confirms the truth of the parable which the Church puts before us as our meditation for this day[1]: that the all-powerful Word of God, preached throughout the world, is, speaking comparatively, barren of fruit. The Word of God, that in the world of Nature has only to be spoken and it is obeyed, the Word that called worlds out of nothing, is unproductive, unfruitful, unprofitable, when it has for its subject the hearts and minds of men.

And its barrenness is not to be attributed to the fact that it is sparsely scattered through the world, for the Word of God was never preached so widely as in our days, there are few in the world to whom the Divine message has not been brought: and in Christendom preaching is an institution, it is one of the many offices of the priesthood, the pulpit is a necessary part of every Christian church, and there are few that cannot say that they have heard over and over again the truths of Christianity preached, the precepts of Christian morality inculcated, the laws of God and of His Church explained. "Whence comes it then (as Saint Chrysostom asks) that the Word of God, in itself so fruitful and divine, should be so feeble and ineffectual in the Christian world?" Whence comes it that the sublime truths which Christ preached,

1 Sexagesima Sunday.

and which are in our days repeated by His ministers, so powerless to make men good Christians? Why is it that Catholics who have every opportunity of learning the truths of their holy religion are yet only half-instructed? Why is it that the truth spoken day after day from pulpit and altar is only half believed? Or if it be believed, where is the fruit? Is there less sin in the world, because again and again the degradation of sin and the injury sin does to God have been pointed out by those who have learned the one truth by experience, and have been taught the other by the Holy Spirit of God? Is the love of the God growing daily amongst Catholics because again and again they have been told that God, and God alone, is worthy of love? Are the tales about Heaven which we tell believed? How many, then, have forsaken the world to follow Christ, whose presence and whose love is Heaven? Is the truth that there is a hell believed? How many are there whom the thought of hell restrains from sin? Is it believed that God is just, and that His justice may strike at any moment? Why then do bad Catholics tempt God to exercise His justice by striking them into hell? Or is it not rather true that, though the world accepts our ministry, and believes us to be ambassadors of God, the message which we bring is not received, the truths which we preach are not believed? We might turn to God as the prophet of old and say: "Who hath believed our report? All the day long have I spread my hands to a people that believeth not and contradicteth me?"

Now, this inordination cannot be attributed to

the Word of God itself, for the truths of God are always the same, and they always possess the same intrinsic power of moving men's minds to grace, for the same reason it is to no purpose that we accuse the ministers of God; for, in whatever way they speak, they must needs speak the truth, and the truth, however spoken, is powerful for good, if it only be received with proper dispositions. If, therefore, in those latter days there are few visible fruits of this ministry of preaching, we must trace the failure, as our Divine Lord traces it in to-day's Gospel, to the soil in which the seed is sown, or the different dispositions in which men receive the religious truths that are preached to them.

Our Divine Lord, then, enumerates the several classes which abuse the Word of God, and the only class to whom the Word of God is profitable. We may express His distinction in this way.

There are those who hear the Word, and do not believe it; there are those who hear the Word and believe it, but do not keep it; and those, on whom in another place Christ has invoked a blessing, who hear the Word of God, and believe it, and keep it, and bring forth fruit in season. It is only of the first of those classes I shall speak to-day. And you will have noticed that I have said the first class comprises those who hear the word, but I did not say who hear the Word of God, for the Word which they hear is the Word of man, and therefore they do not believe it.

We are the creatures of habit, and one of its worst effects upon us is that it dulls our apprehension of spiritual things, and leads us to con-

found the things that are of God with the things that are of men. The tendency of our corrupt nature is to look downwards, and unless by the constant practice of meditation we keep our minds and hearts fixed on God and Heaven they must soon become engrossed in creatures. And at the same time we grow into the unconscious habit of ignoring the spiritual elements of religion, and regarding only that which is gross and material.

This is especially true in regard to preaching: the habit of hearing sermons makes us gradually forget what sermons are, what they are intended to be, what they are intended to do, in other words, we care not about the truths of a sermon, the end and object of the sermon, nor the application of these truths to ourselves. We regard only such accessories to a sermon, as he who preaches, or the language in which he preaches; we forget altogether that it is the Word of God, and that its only object is our edification.

We form ideas of sermons purely human; we do not beg the grace of the Holy Spirit to understand His words aright; we do not beg His assistance to form resolutions adapted to our state; we come prepared to scoff, to criticize, to measure and weigh the words of the preacher as the words of man; and the only fruit of the sermon which we bear away with us is the judgment we have formed as to merit or demerit, in a purely human light, of the sermon we have heard. We hear, but we do not believe. And so the Christian pulpit is scarcely more to us than the political platform, and the mouthpiece of the Spirit of God is degraded into a pulpit orator.

Now, such a habit of thinking and acting dishonors God and injures ourselves. It dishonors God, for if God be jealous of anything it is of His graces, and His graces are despised by those who neglect the means of grace which He offers. Such a means is the preaching of the Word of God.

What the Sacraments are to the just, preaching is to the unjust. As the Sacraments are to the just a means of perceiving God's grace, so the Word of God to the sinner is an invitation to penance. If, therefore, instead of regarding it as the call of God's mercy to save his soul, or a forewarning of the justice of God, he thinks it only the Word of man, who is obliged at certain periods to enunciate certain propositions; if instead of taking to himself the admonitions which God in His mercy addresses to him by the lips of His servant, he weighs the words of the preacher lightly, and pays so much respect as is due to the words of men, and no more; if instead of humbly and thankfully accepting the message of mercy from Heaven that calls him to penance, he stifles the grace of God, and reasons against his reason that after all these words are only the words of man, then assuredly he is dishonoring God by refusing to acknowledge the presence of God, or the appeal that God makes to him.

Upon the other hand, if to sinners the preaching of the Word of God is a call to grace, to the just the preaching of the Word of God is second only to prayer and the Sacraments as a means of perceiving grace and persevering in it. It is a constant appeal to them not to forget God, it is a constant reminder of the insecurity of their position, it is a

constant exhortation to perseverance. The Word of God is intended by God to quicken their faith, to revive their hope, to increase their charity. It is the spoken invitation of Christ to His banquet, and to the prelude to the banquet, the Sacrament of Penance. "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me."

Do they not then dishonor Christ who will not recognize the language of Christ, but study only the rhetoric of His servant: not thinking of promptly accepting the invitation of Christ, or the warning of Christ, or the comfort of the words of Christ, but only considering how the herald of Christ comports himself, and whether he has an easy address.

What would you think of the reverence of a Catholic who, whilst the Blessed Sacrament was exposed on the altar, thinks only of the flowers and the lights, and the dress of the ministers, or the perfume of the incense and the voices of the choir? What would you think of a Catholic who is willfully distracted when about to receive Holy Communion? Further still, what would you think of a Catholic who deliberately makes a sacrilegious communion? Now, Saint Augustine does not hesitate to compare the man who fails to recognize in the words of the preacher the words of the Holy Ghost to the man who makes an unworthy communion by not discerning the Body and Blood of the Lord under the species of bread and wine. The comparison is striking; and to us, who have fallen into the evil habit of thinking lightly of the words we hear, it appears almost extravagant. But you will find upon reflection that the irrever-

ence you do to the Word of God by taking it for the word of man is nearly equal to the irreverence you do to the Body and Blood of our Divine Lord by not discerning the presence of both under the species of bread and wine.

The poor, human language which we utter, or the person of him who speaks, are no more to the Wisdom that is spoken than the appearance of bread and wine to the reality of the Body and Blood of Christ. Surely there is no Catholic that would treat the Blessed Sacrament as mere material bread! There is no Catholic that would not shudder at the thought of treating with the slightest irreverence the holiest mystery of Christianity. And yet if you think the opinion of Saint Augustine worthy of being weighed, you will bring as preparation for hearing the Word of God with fruit something of the reverence with which you approach the Holy Communion, and the spiritual discernment of the words and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, however it be spoken by men.

In the second place, such reverence is absolutely necessary if we care to profit by the instructions which we hear. If a sermon or discourse be heard as the Word of man it will operate as the Word of man, if it be heard as the Word of God it will operate by the grace of the Holy Ghost. It would be inconsistent for us to expect the illumination of the Holy Spirit of God and his grace to form resolutions and to put them into practice at the very time we profaned His Sacred Word by mistaking His Wisdom for human wisdom and sitting in judgment on His servant.

If, therefore, we study the words of God's minis-

ters as the words of men, then we shall reap from them such fruit as the words of men are wont to produce: we shall be amused or entertained, instructed, we may be worked up into a momentary enthusiasm, but it is utterly unavailing for salvation. If all the eloquence of the Bar or the Senate could be used on the side of Jesus Christ, to plead His cause and the cause of His Father, it would not save a single soul, or even help a single soul to make a supernatural resolution, if it were not dictated by the Holy Ghost, or at least received as the supernatural wisdom of the Holy Spirit. We receive according to the measure of our belief. The Spirit of God metes out His grace to us in proportion to our faith. If, therefore, we take the servant of the Holy Ghost as our preceptor, we must be content with such assistance as the servant gives; if we pass by the servant and forget the personality of the servant, and go straight for instruction to the Holy Spirit, then we shall receive guidance and assistance proportioned to our faith.

We have two singular instances of this in the Scriptures—one in the Old Testament, one in the New. The propet Ezechiel has received a commission from God to carry a two-fold promise to the people—a promise of justice if they do not repent, a promise of mercy if they turn to the Lord. The prophet spoke, and the people heard him, and they were pleased with the eloquence with which he spoke. But where were the fruits? Where was the penance for sin? Where the cries of mercy to God not to suffer His anger to fall upon them? There were no spiritual fruits, no

grace imparted, and why? "Thou son of man," said the Lord to His prophet, "the children of thy people talk of thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and they speak one to another, each man to his neighbor, saying: Come, and let us hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord.

"And they come to *thee* as if a people were coming in, and *my* people sit before *thee,* and hear *thy* words, and do them not: for they turn them into a song of their mouth, and their heart goeth after their covetousness.

"And *thou* art to them as a musical song, that is sung with a sweet and agreeable voice: and they hear *thy* words and do them not."

Why was the mission of the prophet fruitless? Because the people did not recognize his mission; their thoughts did not ascend beyond the man that spoke to them; they accepted his words, but not as the words of God, and so they *"turned them,"* as was natural they should do, *"into a song of their mouth":* but their hearts were not changed, *"they still went after covetousness."*

The other instance of the fruitlessness of eloquence, unaided by the grace of the Holy Spirit, is narrated in the acts of the Apostles. Paul and Barnabas enter Lycaonia, and preach to the people the Gospel which they have learned. A miracle is wrought, and the blind people rush to the conclusion that the Apostles are gods. "And they called Barnabas 'Jupiter,' and Paul 'Mercury' because he was the chief speaker." And though they would worship the Apostles as gods, there is not a single conversion effected. A miracle is

wrought, and eloquence, like the eloquence of Saint Paul, is expended in vain. They were astonished at the miracle, they were charmed by the eloquence, they were not persuaded of the truth of Christianity by either. They did not recognize the heavenly mission of the Apostles: they were entertained, and they paid the entertainers by their applause. That which was spoken was the Word of God—the fault was not here; they who preached were the inspired servants of heaven, gifted with Divine eloquence, and free from all thoughts of vanity—the fault was not there; but the soil was barren: it could not receive the seed of the Word of God, much less bring forth fruit—there was the cause of the failure.

If, therefore, you would reap spiritual profit from the Word of God which you hear, you must come with hearts prepared by prayer, and with the desire to know more of God, that thus you may be enabled to love God better. You must, therefore, be careful not to mix up ideas of the world with ideas of God, not to confound spiritual with temporal things.

We bring too much of the world with us into the presence of God; unfortunately the reverse cannot be said, that we carry with us too much of God when we are obliged to renew our intercourse with the world. We have no strong supernatural vision to detect holiness in things that are holy, and to look beyond material helps to worship, discerning their spiritual meaning. We are like to those who come out of dark cellars into the broad noonday sunlight. They cannot see the sun, for they have brought darkness with them in their

eyes; and they look to where the sun is without being blinded, for they see only motes of darkness. And we come into the presence of God, but we do not see God, for we have brought with us thoughts and feelings of earth, and to minds thus darkened God is ever invisible, and knowing where God is we look towards Him, expecting to see and understand Him, but the world for ever intercepts our vision of Him. And, therefore, as the sunlight gives neither pleasure nor pain to the blind, the truths of God are neither a consolation to us, neither do they cause us uneasiness on account of our inability to perceive them.

They who have got into that unhappy state of spiritual blindness have great reason to tremble for themselves. When the words of the ministers of God, however spoken or however delivered, have ceased to affect us, or affect us only as the truths of men, not as the wisdom of God, when we can listen with stolid indifference to the terrible truths of Christianity, then we have much reason to fear that God is judging us as He judged Pharaoh. "Thou shalt speak all that I command thee," said the Lord to Moses, "and Pharaoh shall not hearken to thee, but I will harden his heart." And the Scripture is careful to tell us that God kept His threat; as often as Moses speaks the heart of the king is hardened.

God, I hope, has preserved us from such a judgment, but let us not tempt God. But let us come into His presence with knowledge, and let that knowledge produce humility. We shall thus receive what we hear with fruit. For we shall then possess discretion enough to separate the straw

and the chaff from the grain—that is, the minister of God and the words which he speaks from the golden words of wisdom of God. And with such dispositions as these God will not fail to prepare our souls a fitting soil for the seed of His Word, that with good and perfect hearts we may receive His Word and keep and bring forth fruit in patience. "So shall my word be that goeth forth from my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but shall accomplish that which I please" (Is. lv.).

On Scandal

"Every man of the house of Israel that sets up the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face I will set my face against him and make him an example."—Zach. c. xiv.

That the angels of God who fell from their high estate should feel for the stern judge that condemned them a relentless hatred is scarcely a matter of surprise, if we consider the sin of which they were guilty, and the awful punishment it entailed.

Pride, like a subtle poison, had entered into every fiber of their natures, and leaving the vigor of their natural powers untouched, it perverted every noble faculty of their being, changing their beauty into hideousness, their love into hatred, robbing them of the inheritance of Heaven, and endowing them with a heritage of Revenge.

Nor do we wonder that their anger should be reflected from God upon men, when we consider that man has been raised to supply the place which they lost—that splendid promises have been made him, that a birthright to Heaven has been given him, that when he had lost that birthright by sin, there was no swift, fierce, retributive justice to punish him, as it had punished them—that, whereas God has never been to them anything but an inexorable judge, God has never been to men anything but a most merciful Master.

Nor is it a matter of surprise that their hatred of God and of us should be exhibited in their great perpetual struggle to rob God of glory by robbing men of their souls. But that man himself, man, so highly favored, man, the ally of Heaven, man, who has a common destiny with angels, man, whose nature God so honored in His Incarnation, that man should league with Hell to destroy the soul of his fellowman is a refinement of malice, the very idea of which, when it first crossed the minds of the devils, must have startled them by its daring originality. There is in this sin a depth of malignity, a fiendish viciousness, that might well make us hesitate to acknowledge its existence if it were not, unhappily, brought under our daily observation in the sin of scandal.

Let us see the nature of this dreadful sin, and its effects:

Scandal, or, as it has been well-called, soul-murder, is defined to be "a word or deed, in itself sinful, or at least indifferent, which is, or might be, to our neighbor an occasion of sin." Hence Tertullian says that scandal does not arise from a good work, but from an evil work, for good words scandalize no one unless the evil-minded. I have said "which is, or might be, an occasion of sin," from which it is apparent that scandal might be given even though our neighbor, by God's grace, has strength to resist the force of evil example. And on the other hand there are persons in the world so weak-minded or so malicious that they will take scandal where none is given, and find even in the good works of pious people something at variance with God's law, something, therefore,

that will palliate their own transgressions, and afford them a pretext for sinning again.

Such was the scandal which the Pharisees took, or pretended to take, from the merciful dealings of our Divine Lord with the poor outcasts and sinners of Jerusalem, and a salutary lesson does our Divine Lord teach us by the fact that to prevent as much as possible even the scandal that arose from the malice of the Pharisees, he conformed to all the prescriptions of the Jewish Law, and though King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, He bade Peter to take the coin from the fish's mouth to pay a tribute to Cæsar "lest," said he, "we scandalize these."

Scandal may be either directly intended, or only foreseen and permitted. Of the former kind, which is appropriately termed diabolical, I do not wish to say anything, for I presume that there is no Catholic, however otherwise worthless and sinful he may be, so utterly lost and depraved as to wish to second the efforts of the enemy of God by directly inducing others to sin, and thus insuring their eternal reprobation. But it very often happens that good Catholics, who have an intense horror of offending Almighty God, and who would prefer to die a thousand deaths and suffer all the torments of martyrdom rather than scandalize the least of God's little ones, are very often by their own carelessness and indifference and neglect the cause of scandal to many.

It is one of those many apparent truths which we through habit forget or ignore, that each one of us exercises on his neighbors a very direct and

visible and important influence. The least one amongst us has it in his power to edify or to scandalize. We do not live isolated or separated one from the other; we are members of one community, one family. Let no man think he lives for himself alone; let no man dream of wrapping himself up in his virtue and saving his own soul without exercising any influence for good or ill upon his fellowmen. However much he shrinks into himself, and tries to conceal his sanctity from men, it will betray itself unconsciously, and he will become a shining light before men; and the world will see his good works, and glorify his Father who is in Heaven. Let no man dream of walking the ways of the world alone; he will not be companionless in his career of vice and misery. If he will cut himself off from God, he will drag others with him in his fall, as Lucifer drew with him two-thirds of the Host of Heaven; and though he hid himself in the depths of the earth to sin in secret, he will be to others a rock of scandal, and a stumbling-block of offense.

It may be true that he wishes to pass unnoticed, unobserved; it may be true that, however lost to God and Heaven himself, he does not dream of involving others in his ruin; he does not speak to men, and he wishes the eyes of men to be averted from him, he wishes to be allowed to descend into Hell alone; but he wishes an impossibility, and by his example he is a more eloquent preacher of sin than if he stood in the market-square and published his infamy to the world. "Who does not know," says St. Augustine, "that example is more

powerful than precept." Infallible is that saying of St. Leo: "Example is the most telling and persuasive eloquence."

We read in the life of one of the Saints of the Church that one day he asked a novice to go with him to preach a sermon in the streets of Rome. They went through the principal thoroughfares in silence and with the decorum and modesty that befitted disciples of Jesus Christ, and to the novice's surprise they returned to their monastery without having spoken a word. He asked his superior why he had not preached as he had intended. "We have preached, my son," said he, "and preached well by our example."

You don't find many walking sermons like that in the streets nowadays. Unconsciously, it appears, we study one another closely. It is not a very charitable thing, nor a very Christian thing to do.

You see a man for the first time; he is photographed immediately upon your mind; and the image will never be obliterated. You hear his voice; and his words, however long forgotten, will still live in your memory. There is a theory amongst scientists that the physical world is a vast sounding-gallery, a vast picture gallery, and a huge system of telegraphy. That no sound or sight or thought is ever lost. However fanciful it may seem, this is true in the spiritual world. One word lightly spoken may be, very often has been, the cause of the damnation of millions of souls. A father, in presence of his children, gives utterance to a light jest; he does not intend it for their ears, and it passes and is forgotten; and to

the end of his life, perhaps, he is serenely unconscious that his child's eyes were fixed upon him all the time with an intelligence that would have struck him dead with horror if he had understood it; he has dropped a poisonous seed into the soul of his child; it will bear bitter fruit in time, bitterer still in eternity.

A friend, at least one that is supposed or that supposes himself to be a friend, has read a very interesting book—one of those many interesting books that Hell has sown broadcast over the world —apparently very harmless, with apparently deep philosophy running through it, and apparently high morality inculcated in it—altogether a book or journal highly recommendable. He is a *littérateur;* he wishes to show his friend the charms of literature; to show him a world of which he had no previous consciousness. Yes! and he does so with a vengeance; he has taken him by the hand, and led him into the vestibule of Hell, and there is no doubt but that he will grope his way into the interior.

It is needless to recapitulate all the ways by which scandal may be given. To repeat the definition, whoever speaks a word, or performs an act, that is of itself calculated to lead another into sin is guilty of scandal. The man that takes God's name in vain is a scandal-giver; the man that stays away from Mass on Sunday, and helps others to stay away, is a scandal-giver of the worst type; the man that lounges at Mass on Sunday, and shows by his every look and gesture that he is utterly ignorant of the nature of the great, adorable sacrifice that is being celebrated on the altar,

is a scandal-giver; the man that takes his friend, or rather his enemy, into one of those taverns, where, as it has been well said, ruin, disease, and infamy are sold by the bottle, is a scandal-giver; the man who by bad or unbecoming language, the man who lends a bad or indifferent book or newspaper, is a scandal-giver; and remember that a scandal cannot be venial; every scandal is of its nature a mortal sin, and it has double or manifold malice according to the number of persons that are scandalized.

It is needless to speak at length to you of the awful nature of this sin. Our dear Lord who alone thoroughly understood its effects speaks of it in terms of unmeasured denunciation. "It is impossible," he says, "that scandal should not come, but woe be to him by whom scandal cometh. He that shall scandalize one of those little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were tied around his neck, and he were cast into the depths of the sea." And St. Bernard says, "If the Lord gave His blood as the price of the redemption of souls, does he not suffer a far greater persecution from him who by evil example destroys the souls which Christ redeemed than he suffered from the soldiers who shed his blood?"

And if we examine for one moment the deadly effects of this sin of scandal we shall find it difficult to express the horror with which it must inspire every Catholic mind.

To give scandal means simply to aid and abet the enemies of God and our enemies in carrying out their designs for our own destruction, and it means to counteract, as far as is in our power,

the merciful designs that God has for our salvation. The scandal-giver is the agent of Hell upon earth; and the bitterest enemy of God and his fellow-creatures. I should be sorry, indeed, to limit the boundless mercy offered, but I think that if there is any sin unforgivable, it is the sin of scandal. God may freely pardon and forget sins committed against his own honor; but when these sins are likewise the means of tearing from His bosom the souls that He loves so dearly and that are become doubly dear to Him inasmuch as each has been purchased by the blood and life of His Son, it will be a stretch of mercy, indeed, if He can take up to Heaven and endow with eternal glory and happiness that scandal-giver, that soul-murderer, whose life has been spent in robbing Heaven and God of glory, and robbing his fellow-men of the happiness that was their right by birth, and that was repurchased for them by the blood of Jesus Christ.

They say that in Heaven all unpleasant memories are wiped out and there is happiness and glory unalloyed; but I find it difficult to understand how that man can walk around the courts of Heaven when he knows that the victim of his scandal is bound on the hot floor of Hell; how God can hold him in the embraces of His love when He knows that the soul lost by his scandal is held in the grasp of devils; how he can approach Jesus Christ, to kiss the wounds in His hands and feet, while he feels that he has neutralized all the sufferings of Calvary, and trampled on the blood that was shed then, inasmuch as he has been the cause of the damnation of one of those souls for which Christ

died; how can he face the Father, whose image in that soul he has so fearfully disfigured; how can he face the Son, when he remembers those words: "See that you despise not one of those little ones; for I say to you their angels in Heaven for ever see the face of my Father who is in Heaven"; how can he face the Holy Ghost, whose efforts to save that soul he has baffled by his scandal; how can he look upon the face of the Mother of God, whose intercession and protection he rendered unavailable by his evil example; how can he mingle in the society of saints, whilst he bears upon him the brand of fratricide; how can he listen to or take the slightest pleasure in the harmony of Heaven, whilst his ears are filled with the despairing cries of that poor, damned soul, with damnation flying up for ever against him before the Throne of God, and he has to bear the silent, reproachful anger of Heaven, and, what is worse, the applause of Hell?

Oh! our life on earth is a very solemn, terrible thing. We all know that it is no May Day game to have to work out our own salvation: that it behoves us to do it with fear and trembling, knowing that the alternative of Hell or Heaven is a fearful one. But when to this we add that we have not only our own souls to save, but the souls, too, of our fellow-creatures; that each one of us exerts on the soul of his neighbor a direct, immediate, and permanent influence; that every soul with whom we come in contact is tottering on the brink of Hell, and a breath may save them or a breath destroy—when we realize all this, we must conclude that no caution on the part of a Catholic can be excessive. "Place, O Lord, a guard upon my

mouth, and a gate of prudence before my lips, that I may not offend with my tongue. Deliver me from blood, O God! Thou God of my salvation!" "It were better for him," said our dear Lord, "that he should sink into the depths of the sea, under the weight of a millstone!" Better than what? Better than to sink into Hell, with a dead, damned soul tied around its neck!

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"Full of Grace and Truth"

These closing words of the Gospel of St. John, which are read nearly every day at Mass, fitly express the Divine mission and character of Christ.

The sin of Adam brought three great curses from Heaven. The second Adam brought three great blessings which either revoked or counteracted these curses. The first of the evils of Adam's sin was that God withdrew from the world. Into the mouth of God Himself His servant puts the words:—"My delights are to be with the children of men." And there cannot be a doubt that whilst man was still unfallen, and the earth still uncursed, the Almighty Creator held intercourse with man; certainly as close as the present communion of His angels with Him. But when man rose up and defied his Maker, God departed from His world, broke and dissolved the sweet communion which He held with His creatures, and departing in bitterness and anger left behind a curse, and did not show His face again, but when He spoke it was in thunders and lightnings to give laws not of mercy and love but of strong justice, and His accents were no longer accents of sweetness, but full of vengeance and Divine fury. This was the first great curse—the banishment of God from the world.

The second effect of sin was—the loss of the knowledge of God. Whilst man was yet the friend of God, God spoke to man, and infused into his soul a Divine knowledge. What a teacher, dearly beloved! The Divine Spirit, that afterwards touched the lips of Isaias and raised John to Heaven from his isle of banishment that he might see with his own eyes the truth of the things that were revealed to him. And what a pupil! Man in all the primitive excellence of our great nature —with a mind capable of grasping the infinite, seeing all things truthfully mirrored in the mind of God. And with a soul, the sublimity of whose aspirations was only equaled by the breadth and grasp of the great intellect that governed it with unquestioned power. That voice of God filled the mind of man with knowledge, the Divine knowledge of faith. Hearing God, he had an intuitive knowledge of God and the Divine Nature of God, in all its magnificent perfection.

But when God withdrew from intercourse with man in sorrow and anger, the light and the knowledge disappeared with Him. And then there was no life, no light, no truth amongst men—the intellectual and moral atmosphere was darkened, and to that enfeebled, blinded intellect all was as dark as the blackness of midnight. This is what Isaias complained of when he explained—"There is no truth, no knowledge of God in the land." And the Lord Himself declared to the Jewish people: "My people have been silent, because they have no knowledge. Cursing, lying and corruption overflow the land. Blood has touched blood, because there is no truth, no knowledge, in the land."

The third great evil was the loss of Divine Grace. This, of the three, was by far the most terrible. For unless that were recovered, man's losses would be eternal. If God had withdrawn, still at the hour of death, man would see God. If man lost the knowledge of God, at death he would recover it; but these favors were conditional, for if man died without having recovered Divine Grace, he would lose God Himself, and the knowledge of God for eternity.

If man had only kept Divine Grace, he might have borne with the absence of God and the deprivation of His great knowledge. That grace would have kept him holy in purity, and in the gift of a strong, abiding, vigorous, efficacious command over every passion, over every inclination, and have given empire to the soul over the body, and all other graces of God to the heart of man and the soul of man.

But by sin he lost everything—even the greatest misery of the consequences of sin: the wavering of the mind, the hardening of the heart, the rebellion of the passions might have been tolerable with Divine Grace—for then he could assure himself that he was still the child of God, dear in His Father's eyes, and watched over with a Father's love, even in his misery. But sin deprived him of that last consolation, and left him in a state of utter spiritual poverty and distress—abandoned by God, deprived of that knowledge which was his life, and with the painful consciousness of possessing only the inheritance of his sin, which made him hideous in the sight of God and unbearable even to himself.

Now let us consider the reparation which Our Divine Lord effected. We find that He brought with Him precisely the three things which mankind had forfeited. Almighty God left the earth filled with anger against man and with the awful curse upon his lips. He departed in wrath, He left the poor trembling sinner horror stricken at His curse. Heaven and earth took up that curse, and leagued themselves with God their Maker against man the rebel.

That curse permeated nature, changed all its blessings into misfortunes, and left man alone in his misery and sin, Heaven estranged from him, and the forces of Nature hostile to him. And what a contrast between this departure of Almighty God and His second coming. He left with a curse; He came with a blessing. He left in anger, He returned in peace. How terrific was His withdrawal! How sweet and loving His advent!

And why did He come? The angels told the world at His Birth—to give "glory in the highest to God and on earth peace to men of good-will." And His after life showed how well He fulfilled that mission. Mark the very first word that fell from His blessed lips. He took the people up into the mountain; and for the first time since the fall of Adam, God, visibly seen, spoke to the world. And what were the first words He spoke? "Blessed are the poor." By those words He revoked the great primal curse. He blessed poverty —He put a premium upon suffering of every kind. Now, what is poverty and suffering? The effects of sin. By therefore pronouncing a blessing upon its results, He took the sting from sin and from

death. He lifted from men's souls and from Nature the awful malediction of Heaven, and whilst He left the suffering and the poverty to teach men what it is to forget God, He blessed those who bore them in humility and patience, as taking part in the great sacrifice of atonement which He Himself was so soon to offer.

And thus in the advent of His Sacred Humanity, He brought back to earth the first blessing it had lost—the privilege gift of God's Sacred presence. God the Avenger had departed—God the Regenerator had come. Departing from Paradise He left a curse. "In thy sweat thou shalt eat thy bread," and now, our Redeemer, for all the hard-worked, sorrowful sons of Adam has the everlasting welcome and the everlasting promise: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-burdened, and I will refresh you."

Moreover, He brought back with Him what man has also lost by sin—the truth—the knowledge of truth. Oh! here was an incalculable loss, and here was it again never to be sufficiently valued. The blind man, with his soul caged in a prison of darkness, enjoys supreme felicity compared with the man whose life is in endless search after Divine Truth. I know no state more unhappy than that of the man who, filled with a desire after Divine Knowledge, and having no means of distinguishing the truly Divine from the counterfeit Divine, is for ever picking up pebbles thinking them pearls, and then flinging them from him in disappointment and disgust. Such a man, his intellect narrowed by each succeeding disappointment, will inevitably fall either into a state of idolatry, or, if he can

exist without worshiping, into a state of doubt about everything. Such was the condition of the world at Christ's coming. The knowledge of all Divine Truths had steadily faded from the minds of men until, at the birth of Christ, men's conception of God and His attributes were as uncouth and rude as those of any untutored savages of the present day. Then Jesus came, speaking as God, declaring Himself to be God, and that His mission was to teach truth.

He came not to judge, but to save, nor to take silent notes of man's weakness, and to scan all his imperfections, but to take from men's eyes their blindness and from their hearts all hardness. To make anxiety about truth a thing of the past; to give to pious inquirers a ready means of knowing the truth for which they are seeking, that humanity might not any longer have a creed to seek, but simply the truth to embrace; and embracing that truth find in it the freedom which is its invariable companion. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

But the most terrible of all our losses was the loss of Divine grace, and this also Christ brought from Heaven to purify, strengthen, regenerate the souls of men. Thus He came not only to enlighten the minds of men by His heavenly wisdom, but, perhaps, still more to purify their souls by the action of divine grace. In that last sentence, therefore, of the evangelist, the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, we have comprised the whole economy of human salvation—that is, the restoration to the world of that which it had lost in Adam's sin, God, the knowledge of

Divine truth, and the possession of Divine grace.

But one thing is clearly evident: that regeneration of mankind to be perfect must be continual, for the tendency of our nature is downwards. Mankind is constantly retrograding, and it needs all the Divine power to withstand the tendency of men's hearts and minds to utter ruin and irreligion. The word of Christ, therefore, must needs be perpetuated. His mission will only be consummated at the consummation of all things.

If that only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth, again left the world, again the world would relapse into the darkness, which the rays of the Sun of Justice alone can pierce and illumine.

But what do I say? The world would relapse. Why, the world has relapsed. A distinguished priest has called this nineteenth century the Sodom of all the centuries, and the term is not misapplied. The shadow of death is slowly creeping over the world, because God now is not withdrawing from the world, but the world is banishing Him. The signs of the times are very portentous; gradually the world is drifting into a condition to which, in the history of Christianity, to find a parallel it will be necessary to go back to the days of Pagan Rome.

Under the title of the "worship of the beautiful," a new religion is being introduced, or rather an old religion is being revised—the old religion of luxury, of sensuality, of cruelty, avarice and self-seeking that made the Rome of the emperors a wonder of iniquity to the world. The souls of men are estranged from their Maker, and needing some-

thing to worship, they have turned from the Creator to the creation of human genius, and it is no longer Christ is worshiped, but the latest poem, the brilliant pictures, the finely turned statue; and that Infinite Beauty, whom the whole soul of an Augustine worshiped with bitter tears for not having known It sooner, is superseded by the work of His creature's hands.

The very words of Christianity are abolished; in this frightful age men speak of a work of art with as much enthusiasm as a Francis would speak of the infinite perfection of God or the happiness of Heaven.

So far for the educated classes! But what shall I say of the poor and the uneducated? Struggling from day to day to earn their bread, snatching an hour from labor to devote it to horrible excesses, smoking and drinking away God's own blessed Sabbath—with every human feeling and every divine aspiration beaten out of them by the hard treatment and cruel dishonesty of their fellowmen—they live on, wearing out in sorrow the life that is a curse and a burden to them without God, and having no hope in this world or the next.

Ninety-nine per cent. of the working-classes in this country are born, live and die without the knowledge that they have God-given souls, redeemed by God and created for Him. Their whole religion is summarized in the profession—"I believe in God, if there be a God." And they only speak of that awful creation of God's justice—the fire of Hell—as an imaginary place to which they would like to condemn the vast majority of their fellow-creatures.

Where is God? Where is the Divine Truth that Christ promised should set the world free, where are the Divine graces that were to be showered so liberally on human souls, making them to fructify and blossom in all meek submission to Almighty God, and all kindly feelings to their fellowmen?

The cause is not far to seek, nor have I any hesitation in declaring it. It is to be found in the fact that men have rejected Christ. That they refuse to accept Himself, His truth, His grace, as He Himself wished them to be accepted, in His Church and by the ministration of His Church. There was only one Church in which Christ promised to be present. "Behold I am with you all days even to the world's consummation." There is only one Church which professes to possess Him. There is only one Church that declares that before Christ left this world, He substantiated Himself in the Blessed Eucharist, and that as truly as He changed water into wine at the marriage feast in Galilee He changes bread into His Sacred Flesh and wine into His Sacred Blood at the moment of Consecration in the ever Adorable Sacrifice. "I will not leave you orphans." "I am with you all days even to the world's consummation." That Church they knew not, hence their misery.

On the Mass

"From the rising of the sun to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation."—Malachias I. ii.

ONE of the saddest things in our spiritual life is that our familiar acquaintance with the great truths of our Holy Faith very often leads us to forget their sanctity and their excellence. Unhappily we are so constituted that our habit of regarding holy things with familiarity very often destroys within us that reverence and respect with which they are wont to inspire us, and the infinite benefits that can be derived from them lose half their value in our eyes because they are so easily attainable. And then a little reflection, it may be a word spoken by chance, or some good book, awakens and revives within us that deep, instinctive reverence for holy things which seems to be born with Catholics, and to grow with their growth, and to strengthen with their years; and we very often see persons that only a moment before treated sacred things, I won't say lightly, but yet not with all the respect they deserved, draw back suddenly, and are filled with shame and fear to think that they were so near to God, almost touching Him, irreverentially, and with indifference.

Of nothing is this more true than of that most sacred, holy, sublime Act of Religion, the essence of everything good and beautiful in the Church of

God, the condensation of all its sanctity, the source of all its grace, the center of all its goodness, the one grand central object of its magnificent and deeply mystic ceremonial, its life, its essence, its strength: I mean the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It has been well called the Sun of Christianity. Without it Christianity would be an impossibility, with it Christianity becomes the sublimest reality. It is the cause of the undying life of the Catholic Church; it is the source of all its vigor and strength; after the life of the Church for almost nineteen hundred years it still possesses as in the beginning an active principle of self-preservation, a means of renewing its ever-ancient youth in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

It is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, "the clean oblation offered up to God from the rising to the setting of the sun," that diffuses through the Catholic Church the energy, the warmth, the life that characterizes it; if we could enter into the inner life of the Church, we would be astonished at the mighty, supernatural work that is being effected there; we would be dumb with surprise if God could let us see for a moment into what beautiful temples of Divine Love the Grace of the Holy Spirit has transformed many a humble, obscure, hidden soul. Think of all the sanctity of the deserts of old that God peopled with saints; think of all the collected sanctity of the cloistered, consecrated lives, when the triple vows of poverty, purity, and most of all obedience, transform every meanest action or word or thought into a rich, Heaven-pleasing, meritorious work: we would be forced to ask ourselves to what great source shall

we trace these wonders of silent, hidden love? what is the center of this angelic life, so quiet and yet so like to Heaven? what is the vital principle of this life, so uncongenial to everything evil, so fertile of good? what is the great action of the day around which all the others cluster, and from which all the others derive their merit? It is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which these holy spouses of the lamb united the Sacrifice of themselves to the Sacrifice of the great Victim on the Altar, and thus renewed the consecration of themselves to His Eternal love and service.

And to what shall we trace the languor, the coldness, the lifelessness, the torpor, of all other religions, if not to the absence of this great sacrifice? for religion without sacrifice is an impossibility. Sacrifice is the soul of religion, and mere external worship without sacrifice cannot be otherwise than displeasing in the eyes of God. This is a truth that has been understood in every system of religion that has existed since the beginning of the world, and though the awful darkening of the human intellect that was superinduced by original sin prevented men from understanding the nature of the Divine Being to whom sacrifice should be offered, and therefore the quality of sacrifice that would please Him, and although their sacrifices were therefore for the most part loathsome in God's eyes, the very fact of their offering sacrifice at all proves that they at least understood in what the essence of religion consists, and that they possessed an instinct that led them to acknowledge God's supreme dominion over all things, and the total dependence of all things upon Him.

The sacrifices of the Jews were pleasing to God, because God Himself prescribed them; and yet St. Paul calls them weak and needy elements, because they were shadowy and defective, and merely typical of the One great Sacrifice of Justice, that was to replace them, and was to be Catholic and Eternal. "But Christ, being come, an High Priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is not of this creation; neither by the blood of goats, or of calves, but by His own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and of oxen sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God!"

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, therefore, is the one great sacrifice which all the others duly typified and prefigured. It alone is holy, it alone is perfect, it alone is complete.

It is most holy, because Christ the High Priest is holy, Christ the Victim is holy, God to whom it is offered is holy. It is most perfect, because by it the supremacy of the Father is most fully and perfectly acknowledged and the dependence of all creatures upon Him most fully and explicitly confessed. It is complete, for no Sacrifice can be greater than the Sacrifice of an Infinite Being to an Infinite Being; it offers the most ample reparation for sin, it satisfies all the claims of Divine justice, and it is the source of infinite merit.

Now, in what does the essence of the Holy Sacri-

fice of the Mass consist? In this, that it is an act of religion in which we offer to God as to the Supreme Lord, the Body and Blood of His own Divine Son in an unbloody manner. Hence it follows that, as the Council of Trent expressly declares, it cannot be offered to saints or angels, however high or holy, but to God alone. Christ offered under the species of bread and wine His own sacred Body and Blood to God the Father, and under the same symbols He gave Himself to His Apostles, whom then He consecrated Priests of the New Testament, and he commanded them and their successors to offer up the self-same sacrifice: "Do this in commemoration of me."

Although He was about to offer Himself to God the Father once, through the intervention of Death upon the Altar of the Cross that He might effect the eternal redemption of men: because, however, by death, His priesthood was not to expire, at the last supper, on the night on which He was betrayed, that He might leave to His beloved spouse, the Church, a visible sacrifice such as the nature of men required—a sacrifice, too, by which the great bloody sacrifice of Calvary might be commemorated, declaring Himself a priest for ever according to the Order of Melchisedech, He offered up His Divine Body and Blood under the species of bread and wine to the Father.

And that same sacrifice He every day renews, wherever and whensoever His minister can be found, through whose words He may be summoned again from Heaven, to hide Himself under the species of humble elements, and again He offered to His Eternal Father a victim of propitiation and

most august Mediator for the sins of the world. "The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent, thou art a Priest for ever." By so much is Jesus made a surety of a better testament. "And the others indeed, were made many priests, because by reason of death they were not suffered to continue. But this, for that he continueth for ever hath an everlasting priesthood: whereby he is able also to save for ever them that come to God by Him: always living to make intercession for us. For it was fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

Therefore, Christ is the great High Priest of the Sacrifice of the Mass: He offers that sacrifice through the Priest at the Altar as through an inferior Minister; lastly the Church unites with both, and offers the Sacrifice, not as Priest through a minister, but as the people through the Priest. When, therefore, you come to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, do not come because you are compelled by the positive precept of the Church to attend, do not come as spectators, to be prayed for or amused, but come with this consciousness, that you have a part in the Holy Sacrifice, that you are united with the priest at the Altar, and with the great invisible High Priest, Christ Jesus, in offering to the Eternal God the sacrifice of a most august Victim.

The priest at the altar is the public minister of the Church, but the priest of the altar is not alone: you who assist coöperate with him in offering the great sacrifice; he speaks in your name and in the name of the Church; he asks you to pray that your sacrifice and his may be acceptable to God the

Father Almighty; you, as it were, hold up his hands to support the elements of the sacrifice, with him you address God the Father, and with him you participate, in a measure proportioned to your dispositions in the infinite merits of this all-atoning sacrifice.

But if our Divine Lord is High Priest, so is He also Victim. Yes, the same Christ that once lay a weak, helpless babe on the straw in the little stable at Bethlehem is laid by the hand of the priest on the Corporal as weak and helpless as at Bethlehem, and under the still humbler disguise of Bread. In truth the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a daily repetition of the Incarnation, just as it is a daily repetition of the great sacrifice of Calvary. And in very truth, quite unconsciously it appears, the accidents and surroundings of Bethlehem are the accidents and surroundings of the great sacrifice of the Mass.

The only difference is that very often our Divine Lord undergoes more humiliations as He lies on the Altar than when He lay in the stable. He is more passive, more helpless. To His infinity, of course, it mattered very little whether He should veil all His glories under the form of an infant or under the form of a little bread, because both are created things, and absolutely nothing when compared with His great uncreated infinity; but to our humble eyes it appears that the humility of our Divine Lord in the Mass is greater than His humility in the manger. Again, He had the worship of Mary and Joseph at Bethlehem, and I am sure that one act of worship of Mary more than compensated Him for all His degradation, for she

whose word drew Him from Heaven, ought to be able to console Him for all the sorrow and humiliation of His exile upon earth, but in the Mass He has but the poor, limited, feeble worship of a sinful priest.

And also at the present day it is not difficult to carry the comparison to another particular. For just as there hung over the cradle of the infant-God the fury of Herod, who, in his depraved blindness, mistook the mission of Jesus Christ on earth, and trembled for his little earthly dominion, so, too, our potentates of the present would if it were possible take Jesus away from His universe: trembling for their puny, transient authority, which neither Jesus nor His Church has ambition to possess, so long as they retain dominion, by Divine grace, over the hearts and minds of men.

It is, therefore, the same Jesus, that lived here below upon earth, and was seen by men and touched, and was transfigured on Thabor, and crucified on Calvary, that is present at the Consecration in the great Eucharistic sacrifice. We know it well; we can repeat in clear, accurate language what the exact theology of the Church teaches; and when the little bell gives notice that the great awful moment has arrived, we bend our heads in mute reverent worship, to adore our Creator, whom we know to be present. One moment, and the priest having lifted his eyes to Heaven, bends in the trembling silence over the altar. He holds in his hands a little bread, and before him on the Corporal is a little wine in the chalice. At the same moment, Jesus Christ is in Heaven, rapt up in the love of the Father and the

Holy Ghost, and below His feet, bending in profoundest worship before Him, with their faces veiled in awe of His Majesty, are countless legions of angels. He has all the attributes of the Godhead about Him; His omnipotence is conserving the Universe, His all-seeing eye is looking down into the depths of every human and angelic mind in His creation, His inexorable justice is holding fast in the flames of Hell the souls of those who refused His love. His sanctity repels from Him, even though His mercy and love attracts, those poor souls in Purgatory, who have not yet wiped from them those stains they contracted on earth: when in an instant, in obedience to the whisper of that priest at the altar, that same infinite God has drawn in all His infinite attributes, has sunk down from Heaven, and laid Himself with all His power upon the fingers of His creature, the weak, trembling priest at the altar. His angels have followed Him from Heaven; they are here just as certainly as their brother angels are before the throne of God; they are here, trembling as they tremble before the unveiled Majesty of God in Heaven; they are here worshiping Him in awful silence with their eyes riveted upon Him as He lies there helpless upon the Corporal or is taken up by the hands of the priest; they are here, and though it is not for the first or second or the thousandth time, they marvel just as much at the ineffable condescension of God; they praise His goodness, and try to think what it is in men that can so attract their God from Heaven, as when eighteen hundred years ago they clustered around the crib at Bethlehem and sang their first *Gloria in excelsis.*

GOSPEL OF THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Holy Communion

To a reflecting mind the greatest wonder of the many wonders that surround God's existence and His attributes is the love which He bears for men.

It is quite true that, considered in themselves, His Unity of Essence, His Trinity of Persons, His Immensity harmonizing with His Simplicity, His Omniscience, His Power, are awfully mysterious and incomprehensible: but we regard these mysteries as something intrinsic to God Himself—and therefore not so much to be wondered at; but when this awful Being goes outside Himself, and comes among us, making us to feel His presence, we are dumb with astonishment and terror.

That He should have cast a thought upon our existence was a favor and a mercy; but what did He see in us that, enamored of our existence, He should leave the bosom of the Eternal Father, and the love of the Father and the Holy Ghost, and the joys of Heaven and the worship of His angels, to come amongst us, and assume our nature with all its inheritance of sorrow, and our iniquities with all their inheritance of His Father's anger, and to crown it all by lifting up that same nature and setting it down for eternity at the right hand of

the Eternal Father, with co-equal majesty and power. God, the infinite, the immense, filling and pervading all space—man, puny man, on this His little planet, which is but an atom in the universe; God the Eternal—man, with not even the promise of a day; God the Omniscient—man, that knows nothing, not even his own insignificance; God so holy and pure—man, so impious and impure; God so calmly wise—man so boisterously foolish: such were the two beings between whom an indissoluble union was to be cemented.

The Almighty looked out over His Universe—everywhere beauty and harmony met His eyes: from every quarter were the upturned eyes of millions of bright angels riveted upon Him with unspeakable love; He saw but one nature that was degraded—one on which those same angels never looked but with pity—one on which His Father never looked but with eyes of anger; and lo! He left glory and sanctity and love behind Him and passed through His cohorts of loving angels, and sank down, and wedded Himself to that same nature, which looked so pitiable when viewed from Heaven.

You and I have learned with sorrow and grief and amazement the treatment which men gave their Divine Guest: there remains on record the sad chronicle of the buffetings and the stripes, and the thorny crown, and the mock scepter, and the fool's robes, wherewith men in their blind madness outraged Him who loved them; and you and I would have thought that surely the patience of God would not brook this sacrilegious ingratitude; that now He must arise in His hot anger,

and with one word sweep miscreant men and devils, and even His angels, into annihilation, and go back to His Eternal Father and wrap Himself up in His glory, as He did of old when there was no creature angel to flaunt his pride in His face, and no puny creature man to outrage and insult Him.

But no! our loving Jesus has but wiped away the spittle from His eyes to look on us with greater love, and He has kept His five most precious wounds not to reproach us with them as the work of our sin, but to show how He loved us. And in the low depth of His degradation He has found a lower still. For He has seen something in men, I know not what, that has wonderfully attracted Him in such a way that He has begun to look upon earth as His home, and Heaven an exile; and He will not be separated from us.

He loves the quiet tabernacle and the homely altar better than the splendors of His celestial Kingdom, and the worship of his poor servants, and their listless, languid, tepid devotion and their world-distracted meditations are preferable in His eyes to the burning love of His Seraphim, and the thrilling songs of His Cherubim, and the grand chorus of Hosannas and Alleluias that evermore echo through the vaults of Heaven. But still lower must we go, if we would at all comprehend His love.

He has concentrated by a sort of Divine ingenuity all His miracles of love into one grand surpassing miracle—Creation is not half enough for Him, no, nor Incarnation—no, nor even the lavish effusions of His precious Blood upon us—no, nor

even His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament; but He will come out from His prison of love, and bring with Him His wealth of graces, and bring with Him the merits of His sufferings and death and Precious Blood, and unite Himself corporally and really to His poor servant at the altar rails, and remain with him and be consumed by him, and change that poor sinner in a sense into Himself, and leave him only when He has imparted His choicest graces and benedictions, and made him in the eyes of His Father an object of Divine complacency, and in the eyes of His angels an object of admiration and envy.

A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. A great supper! Very great indeed! And the viands are no less than the Body and Blood of the Eternal God—the bread of angels, the humanity of Jesus with His Divinity unfolded. The Son of Mary—the chaste flesh which He got from hers, and the immaculate Divine Soul which He brought from Heaven. A great supper—a banquet, which the omnipotence of God and His Love alone could furnish.

And He has invited many! By which He means all. All without exception or reservation. He invited the just to come clothed with their sanctity, and adorned with all the graces with which years spent in the practice of virtue has endowed them. He invited sinners to come, clothed in the nuptial robe, which the priest of Jesus will fling around him in the sacrament of Penance. He invites the rich to come, and He will open to them treasures which neither rust nor moth can consume—the treasures of His Divine grace. He invites the

poor to come, for He is their Brother, and He knows that the poor have no consolation on earth and no hope in Heaven but Himself. He invites the aged to come, for He will be their Viaticum for the great journey to eternity on which they must soon enter. He invites with a special invitation and special love the young, His little ones that are so dear to Him, to come with their fresh hearts, which are pure with the purity which He gave them in Baptism—hearts that know no evil and that never will know it, if they will only be loyal to Jesus. He invites all: it is a great banquet and the supper-room is large.

And strange enough, His invitation has taken the form of a command. Yes, for once is the gentle Jesus imperative. For once does He lay aside His mild words and gentle expostulations, and as it were assuming all the prophetical majesty of His Godhead and speaking as the Author and Dispenser of all grace, the Giver of every good gift, He declares in emphatic terms, in words which cannot be gainsaid, in decretorial language, the least iota of which shall not pass, though the Heavens and the earth be moved: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you."

Side by side with those other grand sentences, which Jesus pronounced upon earth, and upon which the grand fabric of Christian doctrine is built, side by side with such sentences as these: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." "Thou art Peter," etc., "This is My Body." Side by side with these we find this de-

cree, this prophecy, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you."

And in this there is nothing harsh, nothing that does not well accord with the merciful disposition of the Redeemer. Nay, it is only from the exuberance of His love for us that He makes this reception of Himself in the Holy Communion so absolutely necessary.

Assuredly He had no need of us; and assuredly we have very much need of Him. And it is because He knows our poverty and weakness, that He has compassion on us, and He would enrich us with His graces; but He knows, too, our coldness and indifference to Himself, our apathy and carelessness about everything that affects our salvation, and therefore He will save us in spite of ourselves, by laying upon us His injunction to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood. And then, as if He had almost repented of having spoken at all so strongly to us, He comes with larger promises, great gifts, gifts not fading or perishable, but gifts that will bear fruit through eternity, and He tells us:

51. I am the living Bread, which came down from Heaven.

52. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever, and the Bread that I will give you is my flesh for the Life of the world.

55. He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood hath everlasting Life: and I will raise him on the last day.

56. For my Flesh is meat indeed, and my Blood is drink indeed.

57. He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood abideth in me, and I in him.

58. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.

59. This is the Bread which came down from Heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this Bread, shall live for ever.[1]

Here are splendid promises! Here are rich rewards! Whosoever receives Jesus worthily in the Holy Communion shall live for ever! Whosoever eateth the Flesh and drinketh the Blood of Christ hath eternal life, and his Master will lift him up on the last day. Whosoever eateth His Flesh and drinketh His Blood abideth in Jesus, and Jesus in Him! Whosoever eateth the Flesh and drinketh the Blood of Christ shall live in Jesus, and live for ever!

And if we for a moment throw a glance behind us, and run our eyes along the head roll of saints that have illustrated the Church of God by their virtues, we shall find that these promises of our Divine Lord were not empty words, but that each one of all His glorious children is indebted for his or her sanctity to the frequent reception of the Holy Communion. They were men such as we are, and they had temptations to resist, they had difficulties to overcome, they had trials to surmount, such as we do not even dream of. Take up the life of one of God's saints. You read there of the practice of heroic virtues, you read of fearful mortifications, you read of long fasts and vigils, you

[1] John c. vi.

read of whole nights spent in prayer, and amidst all his difficulties and trials you see him go forward with indomitable perseverance to the end. Whence has he derived all his strength? How has he gained victories over hell and himself?—victories, compared with which the greatest conquests of the greatest conquerors of earth are but the successes of children? The secret is here. They got their strength from our Divine Lord in the Holy Communion. Where did the martyrs of the early Church get strength to pronounce their faith firmly in defiance of the threats of tyrants? Whence did they get strength to face all the terrors and tortures which the ingenuity of their enemies could invent? Whence did young boys and tender maidens get strength to face the wild beasts in the Roman arenas, to leap joyfully in the midst of flames, to suffer all the tortures of the rack, to endure insult, ignominy, disgrace, banishment, and death, for the sake of Jesus Christ? Whence but from the Divine Master, for whom they were suffering, and who daily gave them Himself in the Holy Communion?

Why are we such laggards in the Race of Salvation, so cowardly in presence of temptation?

The reason is evident. We feed on the husks of swine, and they on the bread of angels.

On Catholic Ceremonial

I do not care very often to take up Protestant objections against the truths of the Catholic Church, because I know from my short experience that they are generally the result of gross ignorance arising from a defective education, and because, in the second place, it seems to be an utterly hopeless task to dissipate that ignorance by any human means.

There is one human imperfection, and it is irradicable in proportion as it is ridiculous, and that is the presumption of ignorance. I have heard of a Suarez, after a life of studious labor, declare his incompetence to deal with the great mysteries of Revelation, I have heard of a Thomas Aquinas, perhaps the greatest intellect ever given by God to this world, humbling himself before the image of his Crucified Master, and asking God's pardon for having attempted even an explanation of Christian mystery. I have heard of St. Jerome, who spent his life in studying God's Holy Word, and at the close confessed how unable he was to penetrate behind their awful and significant obscurity, and I have heard, too, of pulpit coxcombs, who have dismissed in a few flippant words the very weightiest truths of Christianity, and I have heard, to my intense disgust, bible-readers, old and young, explaining with the ut-

most ease texts of Scripture, of the true meaning of which they knew as much as they did of Assyrian hieroglyphics, or the inscriptions in the Catacombs.

I do not know of anything so melancholy as the education which is forced upon Protestant children in our days. I do not think there is a single unpleasant feature in the human character that that education is not calculated to develop. To be frivolous, flippant and foolish, to be rude and irreverent to what they cannot understand, to laugh in self-conceited ignorance at holy mysteries, which their forefathers reverenced—these are but a few of the results that naturally and logically arise from a system, the pride and boast of which is that it gives to the individual mind the right of believing what it pleases.

To the educated Catholic mind, disciplined in holy obedience from its childhood—taught to believe that there are things in heaven and earth superior to itself, and taught to feel that the noblest act a man can perform is to kneel in reverence to his superior, such a condition of unrestrained liberty—the liberty of savages—is a subject of sorrow, and another feeling not so Christian as sorrow and that is, contempt.

It is well, however, once and again to explain Catholic doctrine, and to examine into the deep philosophy of Catholic practice that we may see how rational and consistent is the whole system of Catholic doctrine and worship.

It is an objection advanced by Protestants, and refuted by them at the same time, that the Catholic method of worshiping God is sensuous. It

is the worship of the senses, not of the intellect. It is external and unreal, and not internal and sincere. It is unworthy of God and not satisfactory to the demands of the human heart. It is a mere worship of empty ceremonial, calculated to attract the attention of foolish, imaginative people; it is not the pure worship in spirit and in truth which since the abolition of the Jewish ceremonial law, is alone pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God.

Such is the objection advanced by ultra-Protestants against Catholic worship, and it is backed up by two or three texts of Scripture, of which, as usual, a spurious and absurd interpretation is given. The one sufficient and satisfactory answer to this objection is, that our Lord Himself and His Apostles used a ceremonial, that from the very earliest ages, the worship of the Church has been a worship of ceremony, that the very confession, drawn up by the Reformers themselves, advocate the use of ceremonial in worship, and finally that ceremonial is the natural outcome and result of a sincere faith, and that the lack of ceremonial is at the same time the cause and result of unbelief, and the surest indication that faith is dead, and charity grown cold.

It is scarcely necessary for me to say that Catholics do not attach the slightest spiritual efficacy to ceremonies in themselves. There is no Catholic so ill-instructed as not to know that it does not affect the validity of the Holy Sacrifice whether the priest wears a white or red vestment, that he could validly baptize without a stole, and validly absolve without a surplice. And that the

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ceremonies of the Church, speaking generally, are simply intended for the maintenance of that respect and decorum that are due to the celebration of such august mysteries.

We find our Divine Lord using ceremonies for this purpose during His blessed life. In giving sight to the man born blind, he did not as on other occasions, make use alone of His Omnipotent word, but He spat upon the ground, and made clay of the spittle and spread the clay upon his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloe." He went and washed and came seeing. Again when Magdalen came to Him, He allowed her to use a most touching ceremony, and yet we know that He attached the grace of justification not to that ceremony, but to the deep contrition of her heart. The healing qualities of the pool of Bethesda were made dependent on the moving of the waters by an angel. And in the institution of the great Sacrament of Baptism, the Ceremony of washing with water was attached as an essential element in the Sacrament, not that the grace of the Sacrament could not be conferred, had Our Divine Lord so wished it, without that ceremony, but it was His Divine disposition of things.

We are told in the Gospel of St. Mark that the Apostles cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them. To assert, therefore, that ceremonies were altogether abolished by the coming of Christ—nay, that it is sinful to use them, is to assert what is plainly contradicted by the example and practice of Christ and His Apostles.

That the use of ceremonies always prevailed

in the Church even from the earliest times is testified by all ecclesiastical writers, notably by St. Augustine, by Tertullian, by Justin, who expressly mentions fasting, prayer, immersion in baptism—"the kiss of peace," "the thank-offerings," the distribution of the Holy Eucharist. And, in fact, so clear is the necessity of ceremonial, and so Scriptural its use, that even it is sanctioned and established in the Confessions of the Reformers themselves.

Then, in the Helvetic Confession it is declared that the Churches of Christ always used their liberties in rites and ceremonies, and in the Augustan and Saxon Confession it is dogmatically declared that they sin who violate ceremonies to the scandal of others, and who despise them through pride since they subvert the order of discipline and right rule, and disturb the tranquility of the State.

From which it was clearly evident that the objections to the rites of the Church arose from a few factious opponents, who were blinded by the arch-enemy to believe that the farther they got from Popery, the nearer they were to God.

That a religion of ceremonial is the natural outcome of a true faith, and a sincere love for God is a truth that no one can deny who understands the workings of the human heart. Protestantism in idea is a very grand conception, reduced to fact, it is a miserable failure. Its very principle was to improve in a human manner a Divine work. It made a pretense of a vocation to bring back to a state of perfection a work—a religion that, although instituted by God, and promised His Divine assistance, was yet unable to sustain itself,

or to be sustained by God. "The work of God has failed," said the Reformer, "and we men are called upon to improve it. What God cannot do that we shall do."

And they began by stigmatizing the existing God-ordained system of worship as corrupt and puerile, and they attempted to substitute in its stead a higher and more spiritual form of worship, as they supposed, and they called it "the worship in spirit and in truth." They swept away the altars at which their forefathers for a thousand years had worshiped. They clothed their ministers in an uncouth and awkward vestment, they emptied the niches of the statues of saints, they blotted out or otherwise mutilated the frescoes in the churches, and in a spirit of savage barbarism, of which a Vandal would have been ashamed, they drew the whitewash brush over paintings and illuminations, and left the houses of the Most High God pictures of blank, staring desolation, and rivaling the impiety of Balthasar.

They took the gold and silver vessels of the Temple to grace their episcopal or other sideboards, and whilst they vied with each other in increasing the superb splendor of their mansions, the house of God was shut up and neglected, as if Christianity had become a bankrupt institution, and it was opened for a few hours on a Sunday morning to reveal to the worshiper of the new religion, a bare, hollow, deserted and desecrated house, from which the Most High God had evidently departed, and which wore the appearance of a sepulcher and not of a consecrated temple.

As Catholics, we have to thank God that such a

state of things is past and for ever. As the Bishop of Salford lately said in his pastoral, "the actions even of those who are outside the Church cannot be a matter of indifference or inconvenience to us. However separated from us by a difference in dogma, we know that there is One who has an equal interest in Protestants as well as in ourselves—One whose Sacred Heart is ever yearning to establish the one sheepfold over which He may preside in triumph and in peace. Whatever affects our Lord Jesus Christ must affect us, and, therefore, the well-being of our Protestant brethren must be a matter of the deepest interest to us. It is, therefore, with heartfelt pleasure we recognize the efforts of a body of men in the Establishment to restore the worship of God in their public churches."

It is a great gain that that slovenly system of carrying out public service should be discarded for ever; that there is now a decency and decorum in worshiping God that never existed before. And though, of course, it is but a poor imitation of Catholic worship, it is also an unconscious admission that the consistent, uniform worship of the Catholic Church is that which is approved by God, and best calculated for the wants of men. There is no danger of my being misunderstood. I believe that with all their great sincerity, the end these men propose to themselves, is unattainable. I believe it to be an absolute impossibility to Catholicize England without Rome. But I do not regard, nor does any sensible person regard, Ritualism as a religion, distinct in itself. It is sim-

ply the transition of the Church of England towards Catholicity. It is the effort of a nation rising from three centuries of darkness and torpor to a state of life and light.

And this noise and tumult that we hear, even those invectives against the Catholic Church, are simply the cries of a people that have lain long under the incubus of Protestantism, and have been touched by the hand of God, and are slowly awakening to a consciousness of that true life, of which Our Blessed Master is the author and preserver.

I take their example to prove my point. Why were ritual and ceremonial, banished at the Reformation, restored and why has England returned to ceremonial? Because amongst them the doctrines of Catholicity are being revived. From which we derive the general principle that where there is doctrine, there is ceremonial. When doctrines disappear, rites and ceremonies vanish. If I believe a doctrine with my whole soul, then I must use a ceremonial. If I believe the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist, whenever I pass and repass the Tabernacle, I am forced upon my knees to pay that homage of Supreme worship to my hidden God. If I believe in the Crucifixion of Our Divine Lord what is there more natural than that I should make that Sacred Sign of the Cross from which I derive all that grace and all that hope that makes life bearable, and robs death of all its terrors. At the Reformation dogma was banished; the doctrines reduced to an infinitesimal, perhaps; and therefore the spider wrote in cobwebs on whitewashed walls the history of the Reformation.

But you will say, surely, lighted candles, flowers, incense, these are not worthy of the supreme God. They are puerile and childish.

The answer is a simple one. No! they are not worthy, but neither is the worship of the highest seraph in Heaven worthy of Him. They are simply the worship of human hearts. It is the best we can give Him, and He will not refuse to receive them. They are simply the expression of what we feel. They are the exponents of our thoughts.

Every flower upon that Altar is a prayer; every candle is a sacrifice. That is, they are the language in which we express the worship of our hearts. They serve us in place of words. They are like the gifts of the Wise Men to the Child in the stable. Human and poor compared to the Majesty of Him to whom they are offered; but He does not disdain them. The Word made Flesh has descended to a common level with us, and is quite content to accept the little we can offer Him, provided it be done in a heart, and a very good heart.

If you call it puerile, we thank you for the word. Puerile, that is, adapted for children. Has not Our Divine Master taught us to call the God who is in Heaven Our Father, and has He not said in words of deep and solemn meaning: "Amen, I say unto you, unless you be converted and become like unto these, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

I repeat it, therefore, where there is no faith, there is no ceremonial. When men really believe, they must express their belief. A purely intel-

lectual faith, wrapped up in the mind, unseen and unknown, never yet existed. It might be adapted to angelic, but not to human intelligence. And what was the result of this newly established worship in spirit and in truth? The loss of faith, because we find that when ceremonial was banished, men began by degrees to lose a clear perception of what they had believed, and the truths of Christianity were pared down and minimized until they reached the level of absolute Deism.

And a loss of devotion! Who ever dreamt of devotion in a Protestant church, with its bare walls, its gaunt pulpit, the Ten Commandments carved upon Tombstones in the background, the tedious essay called a sermon, and the organ droning to the old Puritan anthems? In itself it was, perhaps, unobjectionable; but it was not Christian worship, and it did not satisfy the piety of the people. It was a grand design, but above human strength. And, therefore, a wretched failure.

The argument was a plausible one enough, but it refuted itself, or rather the common sense of mankind rose up against it, and condemned it. A few melancholy Puritanical churchwardens may cling for a time to the "beautiful simplicity" of Protestant worship, but the world is turning to the majestic ceremonial of Catholicity, the true exponent of true worship—Catholicity with its grand majestic ceremonies, fit for the Court of the King of Heaven, and its grand music adapted to every phase of human feeling from the jubilant gloria to the melancholy and terror of the "Miserere."

Thus we find that men are progressing backwards. The stubborn obstinacy of Protestantism

is slowly yielding to a consciousness of its awful failure, and stealthily borrowing from Catholicity the doctrines and ceremonies it had so utterly repudiated. Men are beginning to perceive that apart altogether from the Divine Authority of the Catholic Church, it possesses an experience and a human wisdom that is in itself infallible.

If we consider that it has been, since the time of its Divine Founder, growing with the growth of centuries and hoarding up their experiences, even when they had passed into Eternity—that it alone remains of all the institutions that were existent at the death of Christ—that during those nineteen centuries its friends have been laboring for it, and its very enemies instructing it—that it alone is truly the heir of all the ages, inheriting their wisdom, and the wealth of knowledge they had accumulated; when we consider all this we shall at once recognize the folly of individuals who rise up to teach the Mistress of the World in that very science wherein she is most proficient—the art of arts—the science of souls.

What would be thought of a Patagonian savage, or South Sea Islander, who would venture to reform the British Constitution, who would dictate to Mr. Disraeli on the Eastern Question or the State Ceremonial? Yet such, and infinitely greater is the absurdity of those who would teach the Church of God what truth is, or attempt to impose its ceremonial by abolishing it. They should know that every truth is built on the firmest foundations and fenced round with logic so closely that it must remain for ever untouched and unshaken; and that she, with the blessing of

Heaven, will continue to fulfill her mighty destiny, continually rejecting what is untruthful and unworthy of Heaven, but constantly assimilating to herself whatever is chosen of God, and made by His grace worthy of Him.

On Bad Books

Every earnest and thinking man of the present day looks to the Catholic Church as the only power that can cope with the many most grievous evils of social life. These evils have arisen from the world's abandonment of God and the Church; and though many years must necessarily elapse before men will unanimously confess their inability to repair the ruins which they have made, the truth is forcing itself surely, though slowly, upon the minds of men, and even they, who are most reluctant to believe it, are compelled to admit it.

Thus for example, it is seen, that in this very country,[1] all the vast temperance organizations are powerless against the evil of drink, and it has lately been shown by a holy and learned priest, that as the Catholic Church alone has been commissioned to do battle against the world and the devil, so she alone has the Divine strength and power to resist the evils of the one and of the other.

But there is one evil, which has injured God and His Church more than any other, against which the efforts even of the Church must be always partly unavailing, and which it is specially needful to be guarded against, as it is probably the most attractive, the most subtle, and the most suc-

[1] England.

cessful means by which the arch enemy can propagate sin in the world. I mean bad books, bad literature of any kind.

I do not exaggerate the evil influence of corrupt literature when I say that it is the most powerful enemy of God, and the most powerful ally of His enemy.

It has been the chief agent in this awful Revolution, the effects of which are now visible in the demoralization of all society, and if the present reign of sin and infidelity in the world is to have any stability, it will owe it entirely to the perseverance with which bad men will continue to issue from the Press the experiences and suggestions of their own depraved minds.

It will always remain an open question, whether the invention of printing was a boon or a curse to mankind. Up to the present moment, however, it may be safely averred that its evil effects have more than neutralized its good effects.

The France of to-day is infidel. What has made it so? Bad literature. You may pass from end to end of France, and you will not find a single book in a single bookstall that you can touch without fear of committing mortal sin.

The writings of the infidels of the last century and of this are printed and published in every form and variety, they are published in cheap editions, in leaflets, as well as in morocco, blazoned with gold, and there is not a village or hamlet in France that is not inundated with them. Dramas, comedies, tragedies, works on philosophy, moral or natural poems—in every way in which a lesson can be taught, faith destroyed, and morality in-

jured, the infidels of France are doing their devilish work, and with a success that is known only to themselves.

Again in Germany, outside the Catholic Church, every one that can read is a transcendental philosopher, in other words, an atheist; and this, too, is attributable to the pernicious writings of a few dreamers, who have substituted shadows of their own making for the shadowy Christianity that was left by the Reformers.

In America the venality and corruption of the Press is proverbial; and coming home to our own country, we find, in spite of English traditions, and the strong hold which Christianity and Christian morality have upon the minds of Englishmen, that infidelity is as unblushingly advocated, and immorality as openly countenanced and suggested, as in the worst cities on the continent.

It is not at all a pleasant task thus to stir up the sink of the world's iniquity. It might be better, perhaps, to let it rest, especially where, as in England, it seems to be concealed under healthy vegetation; but I regret to say that it is strongly to be suspected that there are many Catholics to whom corrupt literature is not altogether unknown, and I speak to show them the danger of its attractiveness, as well as their unfaithfulness to God in countenancing the efforts of those whose vocation is to blot Him out of the minds and hearts of men.

We find then that evil thoughts and suggestions are diffused through the world through the newspaper literature of the day, the periodical maga-

zines and novels of every shade and type of irreligious professions.

There is a high class of literature too, that is more subtle and mischievous than either of these, I mean poetic literature; but as it is not capable of such very large development as the other classes, and as every one knows what is hurtful and what is harmless in it, I shall not include it, though I by no means intend to exclude it in any censures I shall make.

With regard then to newspaper literature, I wish to caution some of my hearers against those penny fly-sheets that are sent about the country week after week, to pander to the sensationalism and sensuality of the multitudes.

Whatever freaks human weakness or human wickedness may have indulged in during the week are sure to find place in the columns of these journals; and you have a ghastly list of all the suicides, executions, and worst of all, the scandals that crop up week after week, sad indications enough that all our rigid respectability only covers a state of national depravity that is simply appalling.

With regard to the better conducted class of newspapers in this country (if there be, indeed, degrees of comparison between them) they are one and all characterized by a hatred and insane fear of everything Catholic. Now as all these journals have very high pretensions, they speak in very decided, dogmatic tones. They occupy a very high position, their editors and staffs of writers are men of high literary abilities; they pretend to have means of obtaining precise information on every

possible subject, and their modes of dealing with Catholic subjects especially, is so overbearing that there may be weak minded Catholics who will be induced, not, indeed, to doubt of matters of faith, but to yield to the temptation of becoming "liberal."

Now, the habit of sending articles to press without the names of authors (which prevails in England) tends very much to increase the importance of these articles. Indeed, to most of the uninitiated, the editor of a newspaper is so awful and mysterious an individual as can well be imagined, and his utterances are only less than infallible. It is no exaggeration to state that the National Church of this Country has been almost superseded by the Press as a public teacher.

Men do not seek opinions nowadays from the pulpit, but from the paper. As a distinguished writer remarked many years ago, "the Church is now relegated to the Organ-loft and to psalm-singing; its place as public teacher, moralist, etc.," is assumed by the Press.

The Press, therefore, in our age, wields a tremendous power, and unhappily that power is used in the cause of evil, and not in the cause of God.

As I must be brief, I would remind Catholics of a few things it would be well to remember. The editor of any newspaper is an individual of flesh and blood, whose opinion is not worth more than that of any other man; that he writes, not to preach the truth, but to earn his livelihood; that, therefore, he shapes his opinions according to the opinions of the party he represents; that, therefore, his is the most servile of all professions;

that, in treating of Catholic subjects, the ignorance of newspaper writers is only equaled by their ingenuity in framing falsehoods, and their fluency in calumniating.

That the paper must please the people, or the people will not buy the paper; that, therefore, as the public still demand the periodical joke, the periodical lie, the periodical misrepresentation of Catholic faith and Catholic practice, the paper must insert them; and that, therefore, on all Catholic subjects, they are utterly untrustworthy—ignorant of our doctrines, of our practice, misrepresenting our principles and moral maxims, scurrilous, false, and libelous.

With regard to the literature of magazines and novels, it is impossible to give absolute advice; but if I had my choice I would absolutely condemn them; for the subjects of which they treat, for the men and women who write them, and for the fatal effects they have on young and inexperienced minds. For the subjects of which they treat. There are two classes of novel-writers—they who write for money, and they who write because they must write.

They who write for money, must please the editor and the public—the taste of the public is depraved, and, therefore, this class of literature is bad and corrupt. Vice is openly recommended, or so nicely gilded that it looks attractive, the vilest passions of a corrupt nature are shown in the light of amiable follies; these novels have but one end and aim—to destroy Christian morality, and, therefore, their one subject is sin.

Have you ever noticed how carefully the name

of God is excluded from every novel of the present day? It is never mentioned except as an oath. Have you ever seen the beautiful Christian virtues of patience and purity and self-sacrifice and humility recommended? No! but anything that is low and vile and groveling and sensual. The purest writer of fiction in this or any other century—Charles Dickens—is now laughed at by every sensible man, for every second page of his novels is a tribute to the animal pleasures of eating and drinking.

A still greater condemnation must be passed upon those who write because they must write.

These are the demigods of literature, the men who have made for themselves everlasting reputation. Now, what do I mean by men who write because they must write? I will explain to you in the words of Father Hecker: "What else," he says, "is the great mass of our modern popular literature but an examen of conscience, publicly made by the author, before his readers and the whole world? And so deeply are his vices rooted in his heart, that not satisfied with presenting them under the attractive disguise of imagery, they must be spread out to cater to the tastes of his readers, in all their filthy and disgusting details. Why, no one whose conscience is not blinded by sin, can take up a volume of the popular literature of our times, and read a page of it, without detecting some inordinate passion or deadly sin, rankling in the heart of its author." In France, from the time of Rousseau's confessions, in which he makes no attempt to conceal, but rather glories in his criminalities and base-

ness, down to George Sand, the popular literature is one gross attack upon social virtue and morality, and upon all that is held holy, sacred and divine.

The number of infidel and licentious books, written by English authors, and read by English people presents no flattering picture of the boasted progress of the English nation in civilization.

How many crimes would have been unknown to society if such men as Goethe, Schiller, Rousseau, Byron, Shelley, Bulwer had sought relief for their consciences in the divine Sacrament of Penance, instead of flooding society with the details of their secret vices and miseries, and thus feeding men's passions until they ripen into crime. . . . They rid their hearts of the passions and miseries of which they are filled by infecting the innocent and unsuspecting; they gain to their own minds a so-called peace and freedom, by corrupting the pure and the virtuous.

You see then why these men must write. The burden of their sins is too heavy upon them; and they must unload it; they must tell their infamies to some one; they do not know what Sacramental Confession is, and, therefore, they confess to the world. Now, as there can be nothing more beautiful or more sublime than the sight of a sinner contritely confessing his sins to God through his Minister, neither is there anything so disgusting and loathsome as the spectacle of a man parading with pride his secret abominations and filthinesses before the world. And it is this that must be said of almost every poet and novelist of the present day.

All that, of course, is painful and tragical enough, but it has also a comical side, too, for these men, whose mission is to de-christianize the world, tell us, with all gravity, that their mission is divine, and their admirers and imitators hold up their hands in wonder and call them the high priests, the prophets, the sages of the 19th century.

Lastly, novel-reading is condemnable because they bring the young and the incautious into, perhaps, the most fatal habit that can be contracted, that dreamy, sleepy, sentimental, imaginative frame of mind, that utterly unfits them for the real practical business of life and predisposes to mortal sin.

Novel-reading has somewhat the same effects as opium. Novel-readers like opium-eaters, live in a world of dreams. They fancy, feed upon their fancies, live by fancy and the consequence is they become dissatisfied with their condition in life, they perform their duties mechanically, they acquire a love of dress and finery.

All the lessons of early life vanish before the new lessons of the novel. The world is painted in false colors, the ambition of the young is directed not to the love of God, or to promoting the love of Jesus Christ, but to figure before the world, and to catch the applause of the world; in a word—the mind is utterly demoralized and, with such principles, sin is easy, nay, it is not at all impossible that the novel-reader may not enter upon a course of sin through a sense of duty and on principle.

Let me repeat then, what I have said. Avoid

the novels of the day because they are godless; the devil's imprimatur is upon most of them. Because they treat of subjects with which a pure-minded Catholic ought not to be acquainted. Because the writers of them are depraved mercenary wretches, who hate God, and whose avowed mission is to inaugurate a reign of infidelity and viciousness, and because the effects of novel reading are most pernicious and hurtful. It weakens the mind, degrades the mind; it preaches the worship of creatures, it subverts Christian principles, implants pagan principles, and leads inevitably to a shameful idolatry of vice.

It is specially painful to a priest to go into the house of the poor, and to find the *Young Lady's Journal, The Family Herald,* the *Halfpenny Journal,* the *London Reader* on the same shelf, but much better cared for, than the *Garden of the Soul,* and the *Imitation of Christ.* It is very suggestive, indeed, and what a melancholy coincidence it is that we have sometimes seen the pictures from Mary's daughter's Journal wreathed round as in a frame with the Rosary and Scapulars of her Mother.[1]

[1] This sermon was preached in Exeter when Canon Sheehan was young in the ministry and could have no foreshadowing that he was destined afterwards to stand in the front rank as a novel-writer himself. However, there is no contradiction between his preaching and practice, for he makes clear the class of corrupt writers that was before his mind. Those "mercenary writers who hate God" are not to be confounded with authors like himself whose spiritualized pages of elevated and inspiring thought have led many a soul nearer to God.—ED.

On Good Reading

THE last evening I spoke to you of the danger of reading habitually the current literature of the present age. I intend to speak this evening of the great profit that is to be derived from the study of good books.

In our days, every one reads. A great many persons spend their lives in reading. If there be one luxury which rich and poor alike enjoy it is the luxury of reading. Now if this were a mere amusement, which pleased for the moment, but left no serious effects behind, one might pass it by lightly, and without comment. But it is not an amusement, but a serious work; and it is not only a luxury, but a necessity for the moral and intellectual formation of men's souls.

Whether this be conceded or denied, one thing at least cannot be denied, that books have a most powerful influence upon men's characters for good or evil. Nothing builds up a character so easily, and yet so permanently, as a course of reading. If the world of to-day is full of frivolous men and women, it is because their minds have been fed from infancy upon vain and frivolous reading; if the world is full of men and women who are for ever misconceiving, misinterpreting, misunderstanding the eternal truths of God, it is because they have been trained into that obliquity of intellect by those bookmakers and pamphlets, whose

falsehood and error is concealed by a pleasing style, and a show of sincerity.

On the other hand, if we find amongst ourselves those, who evidently realize that they are the brethren of the saints of God in Heaven, who are striving, however imperfectly, to live up to their vocations as Christians, who in childlike simplicity and obedience are trying to follow the precepts of Him who left the world little children as models of Himself, it is because they have learned these sublime principles from pious books, and have had from Heaven the grace to practice them.

It is not difficult to understand this. We learn more easily and more readily from a teacher of our own selection, than from a teacher who is selected for us by others. Now, the book which we read is the teacher whom we have selected, unless, when we read books in a spirit of criticism, it may be said we read them to adopt their principles. This is especially true of a course of reading.

If we dislike the principles of books, we certainly shall not read them. If, therefore, we persevere in reading them, there is proof that we approve of the principles they advocate, and, therefore, we must necessarily adopt them. If our tastes lead us to read certain classes of books, it may be safely presumed that there is nothing in them which we detest or disapprove of; and, therefore, there can be no clearer indication of a man's character than those silent, but eloquent teachers, whom he has chosen for himself.

It is, therefore, impossible to exaggerate the importance of a careful selection of readings; and it is for this reason that the last evening I con-

demned the reading not only of bad and positively immoral books, but also the habit of reading works of a light or worldly character. If we keep this principle, too, in mind, that "books are teachers" it will not be difficult to lay down the regulations and restrictions which every Catholic is bound to observe.

"Books are teachers." Now what is it that every Catholic is bound first of all to learn? Not only the principles of his faith and of Christian morality, but everything that can give him fuller and clearer ideas of Him who is the end of his being and the source of all his happiness.

God has given us minds to know Him; we are bound, therefore, to educate our minds into such a knowledge of God as His Wisdom allows and our faculties can reach.

This is a duty; but a duty inspired by God in such a way that we call it a natural aspiration. The cry of every soul that has ever come into this world is for more light; there is no one that does not wish, if it were God's will, to penetrate the many mysteries that He has veiled away from us.

And there can be no nobler or worthier occupation than to study what God has chosen to reveal to us of Himself, and of our destiny, that we may make ourselves worthy of Him, and of the Heaven He has destined for us. How shall we attain that knowledge? By studying the Revelations He has given us—the words of the prophets and seers of old—the words of the Evangelists in the New Law, above all, the words that flowed from the lips of the Incarnate Word, those words of honeyed

Wisdom that have brought sweet peace to the hearts of men in every age.

Books are teachers! God has given us minds to know Him! And God has given us hearts to love Him. And the more we know of God the more shall we know of His mercy and goodness. But the heart of man is wayward, and the path to Heaven is difficult and intricate; and in spiritual matters we have all a marvelous talent for deceiving ourselves.

For many too it is useless to meditate on God's attributes; they are those who are altogether averse to mysticism of any kind, they have need of sensible things to lead them to God. If you would captivate their intellects, you must show them some work of the Most High, illustrative of His Wisdom, His Power, His Providence; if you would captivate their wills, you must show them not the beauty of virtue in the abstract—but virtue attained to, practiced by men. If you would persuade them that virtue is possible, you must show them that virtue has really been practiced, if you would show them how beautiful is a life of virtue, you must give them pictures of men and women, whom lives of virtue transformed into likenesses of Him, "who was begotten before the morning stars amid the brightness of the saints."

Here, then, is a fourfold instruction for Catholics—God and His mysteries, the Catholic Faith and its mysteries—the asceticism of the Church, that is, the series of rules, of counsels, of warnings, that have been gathered from Holy Writ, and the writings of Doctors, and the experiences of Saints, and which ought to be prized highly,

because it is the collective wisdom of all ages, and lastly, there is the instruction which is a daily need, that is, to be instructed unto fervor in the services of God especially by the examples of others.

No one can deny that this fourfold instruction is an absolute necessity. Every Catholic must know God and His mysteries as far as he is capable of understanding them. Otherwise, he is an atheist. It is not enough to believe in God; we must know that in which we believe. Implicit faith is not enough; explicit knowledge is necessary as far as it is attainable.

And how shall we attain it? By reading God or His spirit in His broad book of Nature; and by studying God revealed in the flesh in the Revelations which He has made. Of the former now I do not speak. But I wish to recommend to you again a diligent and careful study of the Holy Scriptures, especially of the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament; I do not tell you to go to them for your doctrines. You receive the Holy Scriptures from the hands of the Church. It is because of the authority of the Church you accept them as authentic and believe them to be inspired. The loving voice of the Church has formulated your doctrines as she was authorized to do by Christ.

In approaching, therefore, the Holy Scriptures, you do so, not to gather dogmas from them, but to study the life of Christ, and the virtues that illustrated that life, to drink in the wisdom that flowed from His lips, to discern His Divine character in His every word and every movement—above all, to try to understand the mystery of God's love,

shown in the life of Christ so humble in its beginning, so tragical at its close.

The children of the Church are eager to hear instructions from their priests; they crowd around their preachers to learn wisdom from them. How many of them know that there was but one sermon worthy of the name ever preached: that which was spoken by Christ on the Mount, the most tender, the most loving, the most truthful words ever spoken.

The learned amongst us are eager to understand systems of philosophy, and there is only one philosophy worth knowing—the philosophy whose founder was Christ, whose emblem is the Cross, whose motto is: "Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow me," and whose maxims are to be found in every word that came from the lips of Jesus.

Your poets and novelists are very cunning in devising touching scenes, pretty little episodes, wonderful examples of the exercise of natural virtues; but was there ever seen in history or devised in fiction anything half so touching as Peter's pardon and Magdalen's repentance?

Do you want a pure type of womanhood? Where can you find it if you pass by Mary, the Virgin Mother of God? Do you want a pure type of manhood? Where can you find it if you pass by John, whom Jesus loved above all the sons of men?

I am sure I ask God pardon for comparing the words of His Son with the words of men, His heavenly philosophy with the idle dreams of the foolish, His chosen friends, Mary and John,

with such types of manhood and womanhood as the world now gives us; but you force me into making this hateful comparison, for do I not see you following every other Master but Jesus; ashamed to confess that you belong to the school of the Cross, and taking for your models the heroes of your novels instead of the sainted companions of Christ.

This, then, is the first course of spiritual reading I would prescribe for you. The life of Christ, the actions of Christ, the words of Christ, as narrated in the Holy Gospels, and next after this the Epistles of St. Paul, the first Doctor of the Church, which contain the clearest possible expositions of the economy of redemption, and breathe the most tender love for our Divine Master. You shall need no more to know God thoroughly; and but little more to love God perfectly, that is, if you are sensible of the claims of Divine beauty and Divine goodness, manifested in Christ, and eloquently explained by His apostle.

Again, every Catholic ought to know not only the mysteries of our holy faith, but all Catholic theology concerning those mysteries. It is to be regretted that Catholics should be so indifferent to the theology of the Church.

This indifference springs from a principle which in itself is good, but is carried to extreme consequences. The Catholic argues: "I believe the doctrines of the Church, because the Church defines them, and the Church must teach truth, or Christianity is a lie." Perfectly true. But when a Catholic proceeds to say: "Therefore there is no necessity for inquiring; if I do inquire I show a

want of faith,'' such a deduction is perfectly irrational, and is not at all respectful to the Church in which we believe.

Reason, as has been shown again and again, is not opposed to Faith; Reason is the handmaiden of Faith. Reason cannot discover the truths of Faith; but Reason can explain and illustrate them. Therefore, where Faith is firm and secure, Reason must aid and assist Faith. And therefore, the closer are your enquiries into the doctrines of the Catholic Church the greater your Faith will become, the deeper will become your love and attachment to the Church—the more grateful will you be to God for ever that He has brought you into the living light of truth, when the powers of Reason are strengthened and intensified by the power of Divine Faith.

Theology has been called the ''Queen of Sciences''; no wonder, it is the science of God. Every other science and art is enrolled when ministering to the science of Theology. The art of painting is most sublime when exercised upon sacred subjects. The art of the sculptor is never more nobly employed than in raising from marble Christ and His saints. The finest buildings in the world are the Catholic basilicas of the world; the finest paintings in the world are illustrations of Sacred History; the finest music has been written for Church choirs.

Every science is consecrated when it ministers to the Science of Theology. And yet what do we find? That the queen of all the sciences is the most neglected. If we have leisure, we study rhetoric and poetry and painting and the rest, but

the science of God! Oh! that is only for priests! No, it is not for priests. It was not for priests alone that the Fathers of the Church have left us the magnificent results of their labors! It was not for priests alone that Jerome and Augustine wrote, and Chrysostom preached! It was not for priests that St. Thomas studied his crucifix, and left us the product of his study in the most magnificent treatises ever written or published. It was not to priests nor for priests that Bossuet, Lacordaire and Fenelon preached—it is not for priests that Pius IX. has issued his Encyclicals and his Syllabus. It was not for priests; it was for the Church.

And what is the Church but the people. And yet the sublimest of all studies is the most neglected; the treasures of thought, accumulated during centuries with much pain and labor, lie unused and unproductive; there is no curiosity amongst Catholics to know the theology of the Church. And yet, what a magnificent series of subjects does not the theology of the Church embrace. Treatise after treatise on everything that concerns man and relates to God from Human Acts to the Trinity.

God, the attributes of God, the Angels, the worlds beyond the grave, Heaven and Purgatory and Hell, the soul of man, the operations of Divine grace, the Incarnation, the moral duties of men, the Church of God—that alone is a study for a lifetime.

The Church of God—the wonder of the world—whose history is the history of Europe—whose organization, as its enemies confess, is the most

perfect that the world has ever witnessed—the foundress of civilization—the nurse of the arts and sciences—the teacher of Doctors—the mother of Saints—here is a subject well worthy of attentive study. Here is a work worthy of the hands of the Creator—which Divine wisdom alone could create and preserve. And here is a picture of the Divine attributes, for the Unity of the Church is the reflection on earth of the Unity of the Godhead, as the Sanctity of the Church of the Sanctity of God, and the indestructibility of the Church of God's eternity.

But you will say all this is beyond our reach. All this belongs to the professional knowledge of the priest; and it is contained in books to which we have no access. No! dearly-beloved, Catholic theology is within the reach of all. It has been popularized and adapted to the capacities of all in our own days; and at this present time there is not a single subject upon which Catholics may not obtain the fullest and clearest information from books written in the English language.

For example, you wish to study the Catholic theology on the Holy Eucharist! There are Cardinal Wiseman's lectures on the Holy Eucharist—Fr. Dalgairns on Holy Communion, Fr. Faber on the Blessed Sacrament. There are a host of other books; but in these three you have concentrated the whole Catholic doctrine on this important subject.

Again, you wish to study the Catholic doctrine of Grace: you will find in Cardinal Manning's "Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost," everything you need on the subject. You choose the Incarna-

tion: there is Cardinal Manning's latest work, "The Glories of the Sacred Heart"; an exhaustive treatise on the subject. And as in our days the Church is the great subject of controversy, there is no lack of works, written by approved Catholic authors.

In fact, take up a Catholic catalogue and you can see for yourselves that a standard work on Catholic theology is as easily procurable as the latest new novel or magazine. I hope the day is not far distant when the first names our eyes shall fall upon when we enter the Catholic's house will be the venerated names of Manning, and Wiseman, and Newman, and Faber; and the others whom Catholic respect and love will immortalize. Then we shall look for increased fervor in faith, and increased love in devotion—a more perfect knowledge of God, and, therefore, a more perfect love for God. Holiness does not depend upon intellect; and the growth of a single soul in holiness is of infinitely more importance than the advancement of sciences, and success in any earthly study.

But an accurate knowledge of our holy religion is a marvelous aid to sanctity. It leads to a more intelligent devotion, a truer loyalty to the Church, and to the Holy See, a more perfect love of Jesus and His Maiden-Mother, and His Saints. We shall never attain but to a most imperfect knowledge of God—even the revelation that will be given us in Heaven will only reveal our incapacity and our ignorance—but we may be sure that the path which is traced out for us by these holy men just mentioned is in the direction of Heaven, and if we follow it we shall not go astray from God.

Peter's Pence[1]

In the notices issued by the Catholic Bishops of England, inviting the faithful to commemorate on last Sunday the Restoration of the Hierarchy, a request was inserted that the attention of the people should be called to the fact that our Holy Father is at present altogether dependent on the charity of the Catholic world.

The glaring systematic robbery that was perpetrated by Victor Emmanuel, and sanctioned by the silence or secretly instigated by the European Powers, is an event of such recent date that there is no necessity of recalling it to your minds, and we could not forget it even if we were disposed, for the work then commenced has not yet been finished.

Every day reports reach our ears of Church property confiscated, of religious houses sequestrated, and religious communities dispersed, of large foundations for the relief of the poor finding their way into the State Treasury, and moneys intended by the donors to be expended in honoring God or relieving the needy, expended on the wine bills of Garibaldi and the tinsel grandeur of the plebeian Court of Sardinia.

And those patriotic brigands, not content with having robbed the Patrimony of Peter from Our Holy Father, add insult to injury, on the princi-

[1] Preached in Exeter.

ple that we hate those whom we have wronged, and here in England every day our ears are pained with hearing, and our eyes sore with seeing, the foul abuses that are leveled by Press and Pulpit against him who is the only representative on earth of Christian moral force, and who never ceases to lift up his voice against the brute Pagan force that is the only gospel the world will acknowledge at the present day.

In this dull unparliamentary season, editorial minds are relieved by the consideration, that in the absence of an European war, an Irish rebellion, an Eastern difficulty, or some other fitting subject of comment, there is an infallible Pope to be sneered at and satirized; every special correspondent in the fashionable watering place or the continental city in dearth of local news, sends a stale anecdote about "an infallible Pope," and it is sure to be relished; every pulpit orator, when other ideas fail him, falls back upon "the infallible Pope," serves him up in torrents of blood, and is sure of pleasing the intellectual palate of his audience; every tea-table in the country is enlivened by dull solemn jokes about the "infallible Pope"; and thus Englishmen are fed by a constant stream of cynicism, so that it is no wonder that at the very word "Pope" or "Catholic" their blood would turn into gall.

When our dear Lord was giving to His Disciples their commission to convert the world, there fell from His lips the remarkable words: "If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the

world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hateth you. The servant is not greater than his master; if the world has persecuted me, it will also persecute you," and the life of His Church from that hour to the present has been a daily fulfillment of that remarkable prophecy.

Between the Church of God and the world there must be hostility that will never cease, but with the destruction of the latter, and because the world has always physical human force on its side, and the Church, without being aggressive, can only maintain a passive resistance, the Church must always suffer. It cannot injure, it cannot retaliate; the struggle is one-sided—the world seeking the destruction of the Church—the Church seeking the salvation of the world.

The Church works in harmony with the world, seconds the efforts of the world to promote human knowledge and human happiness; the world is not content; it will rob the church of Christianity; the Church cannot yield, it opposes to the world the invincible strength of God, it resists, and its resistance must be successful; but its resistance involves the bitterest suffering. That is its mission; that is its history.

Her glory is ever to fight, to suffer, to right the wrong,
Nay, but she aims not at glory, no lover of glory she;
Give her the glory of going on, and for ever to be.

The hatred of the world to the Church is purely instinctive, and it has been aggravated by its frequent defects. In our days it has been directed, not against the Church as a body, but against the

Head of the Church. The whole brunt of the attack, that was formerly directed against the Church as a body, is now borne by Pius IX. He is the object of the concentrated hatred of the world. It is not the Catholic religion that the world is trying to destroy, it is Piux IX., and though it is true that in former persecutions, the Popes had to bear the largest share, and even when the Church was persecuted in foreign countries, through sympathy they had to bear all the suffering.

It is the special crown of Piux IX. that he has been made most like of all to His Divine Master, in that the hatred of the world for God has taken the shape of a personal enmity to himself. Many, too, of the Popes either commenced their Pontificates happily, or ended them in peace; but the reign of Pius has been a reign of trouble, and there is no reason for hoping that his troubles will cease but with the grave. The last words of Gregory VII. were: "I have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile" and Pius IX. will have something very similar to say.

After having been successively Archbishop of Spoleto and Bishop of Imola, Pius IX. was elected Pope on the 17th June, 1846. With characteristic vigor he set about reforming certain irregularities that had crept into the administration of State affairs. He saw what modern society required, and he adapted himself to its requirements, so long as no sacrifice of principle was involved. Whenever he detected an abuse, it was rectified; he went into all the hospitals, the prisons, the Ecclesiastical and Civil Courts, everywhere he introduced

reformations that he deemed necessary, and enlisted the sympathies of the world.

But the great act of the first years of his Pontificate was the general amnesty that he extended to the political criminals of Rome. At the time, the prisons in Rome were full of prisoners, who, with more or less degrees of guilt, were suffering the penalty of having conspired against the well-being of the State. Some of these were revolutionists of the worst type, and many of them were ungrateful enough afterwards to join the armies of the usurpers, and help to dethrone the Supreme Pontiff to whom they owed their liberties, and, perhaps, their lives. However, the general amnesty was given, and the offenders were merely required to sign a declaration by which each one pledged himself on his word of honor "not to abuse this act of the sovereign clemency of his lawful sovereign, and to fulfill in future all the duties of a loyal subject."

It is well known that Pius foresaw that his clemency would be abused, and though on the publication of the amnesty the wildest enthusiasm prevailed in Rome, on the 15th November, 1848, the Pope's Prime Minister, Count Rossi, was assassinated at the door of the Quirinal Palace, and on the 24th, the Holy Father was obliged to fly from Rome. A triumvirate was set up, and the world boasted, as it had often boasted before, that the power of the Papacy was broken; that Rome was no longer the Rome of the Popes. But on the 12th of April, 1850, the Pope was restored.

He immediately set about repairing the effects of the disastrous reign of the Triumvirs, and for

nine years he ruled the States of the Church with mild judiciousness, and truly paternal care; and during his reign the world had to witness the curiosity of an absolute monarchy where the people enjoyed more real substantial liberty than under the freest and most liberal Republic; and the stranger spectacle of an absolute monarch, living in the most majestic palace in the world, uncontrolled by any constitution, governed only by his own conscience, whose personal expenses never exceeded one half crown a day.

The revenue of the Holy Father never exceeded £120,000 a year, and out of that the following expenses were defrayed:—The support of the Holy Father himself, the College of Cardinals, the ecclesiastical congregations, the offices of the secretaries of State, the diplomatic body, religious ceremonies, maintenance of the Government palaces, the museums and libraries connected with them, and the pensions of the Papal Court, besides the many casual expenses incidental to such a government.

A mistake prevails in most countries that the administration of State affairs was committed to the exclusive care of ecclesiastics. The fact was that the proportion of ecclesiastics to laymen, taking into consideration every department of public administration, was never greater than one ecclesiastic to eighty laymen; and so burdensome was the government of these laymen felt to be by the people, that petitions were sent into Pius IX. by several of the cities of Italy, notably Ferrar, Camenad, Orvieto and Fereno, praying that Prelates might be appointed, for that the people of

those cities would not pay obedience or respect to those lay delegates.

But during these nine years of comparative peace and tranquillity, the enemies of God and of religion were plotting the subversion of the Pope's authority. Cavour, the crafty minister of the Sardinian King, in collusion with the Italian revolutionists, had laid out a plan for the "unification of Italy," as it was called, and I regret to say that the French Emperor, though ostensibly the defender of the Holy See, either abetted Cavour in his infamous designs or, at least, connived at them.

Four different attacks were made upon the States of the Church. The first in 1859, when the Sardinian Government took possession of all the northern part of the Pope's dominions. The second was a direct and open invasion in 1860, by which the enemies of the Holy See took possession of the Marches and Umbria. The Emperors of France and Austria then declared that if the States of the Church were invaded by Piedmont, they would resist the invasion by force. They did not keep their promises. In 1861, Cavour died, and it is a remarkable fact that in 1876 his name and race and family are extinct. In 1862, Garibaldi, without any authority from the Italian Government, attacked the States of the Church, but was defeated and wounded at Aspromonte. In 1864 an express convention was entered into by the Sardinian Government, by which it bound itself never to invade the dominions of the Pope, and to put down all revolutionary attempts. On the strength of this Convention the French troops were withdrawn from Rome in 1866.

In 1869, the Italians, openly violating that agreement, secretly sent Garibaldi with Sardinian troops to attack the Papal States, and so glaring was this treachery that the French Government had to interfere, and in union with the Papal Zouaves, under the command of Charette, they defeated the revolutionists in the battle of Mentona.

In the autumn of 1870 the last attack of Victor Emmanuel's Government was made upon the States of the Church. On the 2nd of August in that year, the French Foreign Minister announced to the Government of Florence that Napoleon would withdraw his troops from Civita Vecchia, relying on the declaration made by the Cabinet of Florence, which had given a guarantee not to attack, and in case of need to defend against all aggression the Pontifical territory. To this the Prime Minister of Emmanuel replied: "The King's Government, in all that concerns itself, will comply exactly with all the obligations resulting to it from the stipulations of 1864." Accordingly, on the 6th of August the French quitted Italy. Even after they had left, the Government of Victor Emmanuel continued to make professions of friendship, and as late as the 24th of August in that year, the chief Minister declared that "Even if there were no convention, the Roman States ought to be respected in virtue of the common law of nations."

Only four days later a proposal was made to the Holy Father and conditions offered which he could never accept; fifteen days later, Victor Emmanuel wrote to the Holy Father the famous letter which

has been well called the Kiss of Judas. It commences "Most Holy Father, with the affection of a son, with the faith of a Catholic, with the sentiments of an Italian, I address myself again to the heart of your Holiness," and then the letter goes on to propose that the Sardinian troops should be allowed to enter Rome to guard the Pope against revolution and to maintain the order of the State.

The letter was handed by the Ambassador to the Holy Father, and in the presence of his Cardinals, the Pope went through every particular of the letter, exposed its falsehood, and to every proposition that was made he answered emphatically, "Never! He would make no terms with revolution or robbery, but he would resist their demands to the last."

That was September 11th, 1870, and on that same day the announcement appeared in the *Official Gazette of Florence*—"The King, upon the proposition of the Council of Ministers, has this day issued his commands to the army to enter the Roman provinces"; so 16,000 men thoroughly equipped and provided, entered the States of the Church, and reached the walls of Rome on the 19th of September.

The Holy Father had given orders to General Kansber, that resistance should be made only long enough to show that violence had been used. At a moment, he said, when the whole of Europe is mourning over the numerous victims of the war now in progress between France and Germany, never let it be said that the Vicar of Christ, however unjustly assailed, had to give his consent to a great shedding of blood. Our cause is the cause

of God, and we put our whole defense into His hands.

At 5 o'clock on the morning of the 20th September, fire was opened on the walls of Rome. At 7 the Pope said his usual Mass in the private Chapel of the Vatican, and after the Holy Sacrifice, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin was sung. At half past ten, when the breach had been made in the walls, the Papal troops, in compliance with the wish of the Holy Father, ceased firing, and Rome had capitulated. The Zouaves met at the Vatican, crying like children because they were not allowed to fight, received the Papal Blessing, and laid down their arms. Ten days later the Roman people were asked to declare whether or not they chose to be annexed to Victor Emmanuel's Kingdom. Victor Emmanuel himself, though repeatedly urged by his ministers to take up his residence in Rome, and though to provide a suitable residence for him they have confiscated the Quirinal Palace, and the Pope's private property, has never been able to do more than pay a flying visit to the City of the Popes.

"We will guarantee you," said his ministers, 'before all the governments of Europe." "Yes," replied he, "but who will guarantee me before the devil?"

Of the struggle which Pius is still maintaining against the world it is not needful to say much. One would have thought that having stripped him of all his temporal possessions, his enemies would have allowed him the consolations of peace. But no! they gloat over his misfortunes, and try by their exultation to conceal their uneasiness.

Pius IX. was never so formidable to the world as he is to-day. The Prisoner of the Vatican is the cause of more disquietude to the world than the sovereign of Rome, and there is not a statesman in any European Cabinet at the present moment that does not look to Pius as the great determining agent of the future of Europe. It is the knowledge that he wields this power that has raised the whole world in arms against him. They robbed him of his temporal sovereignty; it only showed them that he was richer than they dreamed of in the love and affection of his children throughout the world. They are trying to-day to rob him of his spiritual sovereignty. They are trying by every human invention and every appliance afforded them by Hell to undo the work of Jesus Christ; to take from His Vicar the supremacy that long ago was given to the fisherman of Galilee; the right of teaching the world and governing those who are taught according to the principles of the Gospel. "Give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; to God the things that are God's," said Our Divine Lord. "Give to Cæsar," says the world, recalling the words of Jesus Christ, "the things that are Cæsar's; but give, too, to Cæsar the things that are God's."

Statesmen will become Churchmen and Theologians. The Prime Minister of Germany must have the right of determining who are or who are not fit to rule the flock of Jesus Christ. He must have the right of determining who have or who have not vocations to the Priesthood. Nay, more, he must have the right of determining who are or who are not fit to receive absolution. A priest

was imprisoned the other day for having refused absolution to the Mayor of a certain city. So that Bismarck, in addition to his ordinary duties, has added the extraordinary duties of Pope, consulting theologian, and Father Confessor General of the whole of Germany.

The representative of Jesus Christ can never allow such a usurpation. They threaten him, and he answers:—"Fear not those that kill the body, but cannot touch the soul," but "fear Him that can thrust body and soul together into hell."

They laugh at him as a dethroned and deposed sovereign; he says that he is still a sovereign in the hearts of his faithful Catholic people, and thinks that it is one thing to batter down the walls of Rome with cannon, quite another thing to besiege the hearts of his Catholic children through the world.

They have gone so far even as to taunt him with the poverty which they themselves have caused, and out of the proceeds of their plunder they reach him a pittance. He declines, and the whole Catholic world has risen up spontaneously to lay its offerings at his feet.

The Catholic Bishops have taken the celebration of the Restoration of the Hierarchy as a fitting occasion to put before the faithful the claims which the Holy Father has upon their affections. Besides the general interest which his position, as well as his many personal virtues, has exerted among the Catholics of the world, he has special claims on the gratitude of England. He has done more for the Catholic Church in England than any other Pope, and he has always manifested the

deepest interest in the English people. I have put these claims before you not as an appeal, but simply as a suggestion of the ways and means of presenting your offerings to the Holy Father. I know nothing, I ask only the reverent sympathy which we owe to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and given the love and affection which the sufferings of Pius IX., and his nobility demand, to find the means of testifying them is a problem very easy of solution.

State Churches

Even if we had not, dearly beloved, the strong testimony of Scripture, and the Catholic unbroken tradition of nineteen centuries to establish the truth of our doctrine, our own unassisted reason would teach us that the exigencies of such a Church as Christ founded demanded a head, a center, and source whence Christianity would derive its inerrancy and infallibility. And as Robespierre, the demon of the French Revolution, declared, as he contemplated the wreck and ruin which infidelity had made:—"If there were not a God it would be necessary to invent one," so the world is now beginning to see that if Christ had not appointed an infallible Chief to reign over His Church, Christians, sooner or later, would have been obliged to supply the defect of themselves.

I do not know any more palpable absurdity than the theory of National Churches. Perhaps the very strongest note of the Divinity of the Church is its Catholicity; because it was the primary intention of our Divine Lord in founding His Church, that it should be spread throughout all nations—that His Gospel should be carried to every people, Jew or Gentile, bond or free; that it should break down in its mighty course all conventional distinctions of country, race or creed, and leaven the whole human race, irrespective of

these vain and arbitrary conditions which the pride and folly of men had invented.

And whilst thus pervading the world, converting and sanctifying it, it was to remain perfectly distinct—a spiritual substance vivifying the world and quickening it, but perfectly distinct from it—subject to its own laws, mindful of its duties. It was to be to the world what the soul of man is to the body of man. And as the soul of man though connected with the body is yet perfectly distinct from it, and obeys its own laws—a Kingdom within a Kingdom, so the Church was to live in the world, quickening the world, but independent of it.

Above all, not subject to the distinctions of nationality or race, but one and Catholic, indivisible. The Church cannot be divided. And the theory that each particular limb in the human frame is animated by a distinct soul is matched in absurdity by the theory that each particular country or nationality has its own Church. It is sacrificing Christianity to nationality. It is putting Cæsar before Christ. It is a denial of the Church's Catholicity. It is a remodeling on a human system of the Church which Christ divinely established. It is a concession of victory to the world. It is a returning to the old Pagan ideal of State supremacy.

And whenever such a deplorable schism takes place; whenever a state or nation cuts itself away from the visible unity of the Catholic Church, whenever it denies the spiritual supremacy of Christ's Vicar, and declares as the Jews declared of old: "We will have no King but Cæsar," the words of St. Augustine are literally fulfilled, and

the Spirit of God withdraws, takes with Him His conserving power, and leaves that State Church with its purely human elements to decay visibly before the eyes of the world. "When the body is whole," said the great Bishop of Hippo, "the spirit dwells in the whole. But if any member is amputated, does the Spirit follow that severed member. No! The Spirit remains in the body."

The Holy Spirit was upon the Catholic Church when it was all contained in a narrow chamber in Jerusalem; the Spirit of God is on the Church to-day—the two hundred and sixty-four million Catholics whose chief is the successor of Peter—and if again it pleased God to reduce the Church to the small dimensions of the Church of Pentecost or the Church of the Catacombs; nay, more, if the only representatives of the Catholic Church were the Bishops of Rome, and the single priest who is his chaplain, the Spirit of God would be with them, and nowhere in the world besides.

Of this great truth we have three singular proofs in contemporaneous history. Within the last few centuries three Churches have tried to break from the unity of the Catholic Church. Two, to their own destruction, have been successful; the third was saved by the interposition of Almighty God.

The Greek and Anglican Churches have succeeded in tearing themselves from the body of the Catholic Church, and both have experienced, and still experience, the bitter chastisement of schism, and the scourge of revolt, that is, complete and abject bondage to the masters they have chosen for themselves. They shook off the sweet yoke of Christ, and held out their hands to be shackled by

State despotism. Because the bribe was golden they thought it only a bracelet, but they have found it to be manacles, which are riveted on them for ever.

In Russia, and wherever the Greek Church exists, the Tsar is the sole lord and supreme interpreter of their faith, their only prophet, their only pontiff. It was organized and subjected to State influence by Peter the Great, who avowed his intention of having a purely Slavonic religion to be the buttress of his supreme spiritual and temporal sovereignty. And the unhappy people found, to their cost, that schism meant slavery, and the moment they turned away their eyes from the Father of Christianity, they found themselves in the grasp of a despot, their faith and themselves to be made thenceforward the tools of his ambition and lust of power. The consequences are soon evident.

Faith and morality have decayed and died; the word of the Emperor is omnipotent, even when it is opposed to the word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their faith, as we read every day in the papers, is simply fetish worship, and the morality of their priesthood is at so low an ebb, that the correspondent of the *Standard,* a little time ago, turned from them in disgust and abhorrence, and plainly enough expressed it in the letter to his editor.

"It would be easy," says a distinguished writer, "and it has been done a thousand times, to multiply proofs of the complete annihilation, or rather, of the absolute subjection of the whole ecclesiastical order in its relation with the civil authority in

Russia. From the pretended Holy Synod, which is servile when it is silent, and still more servile when it speaks, to the last of the village popes, and the miserable convents of men and women, in which wretched beings languish without piety, fervor, or charity, dismal asylums of ignorance and vice, everywhere will be found the same result produced by the same cause—the subordination, or rather the total effacement of the religious element, under the absorbing rule of the civil power."

The Emperor despises and spurns bishops and clergy, and they in turn cringe and fawn upon the Emperor. Without appealing to past history in the Russian Church, which reads like a history of Rome under the Emperor, we are told how Nicholas, in our own time has insulted, persecuted, and trampled under foot the bishops and prelates of the Greek Church. How, on one occasion he banished to Siberia an old bishop of 80 years because he could not reach Petersburg in the snows of winter. He as supreme pontiff fixed the time for the Easter Communion, he declared legal the marriage of a pagan and a Mussulman, refused to permit bishops to print their sermons, and prefaced and confirmed every act of supreme pontifical authority by the words, "in conformity with the most high will of his Majesty." And his nobles have followed his example. "The minister of the altar, the servant of God, is ranked by them with the lowest menials. He is permitted by the more gracious of them to come to their house on Sunday, and get drunk with the servants. And if by any chance he should offend them by any exercise of his sacerdotal functions, he is sent far away from

his family to do penance on bread and water in a convent, or even degraded, and delivered in that character to the secular power, which means the knout, the galleys, or Siberia."

All this is shocking to Christian ears, but the just punishment of Almighty God for rebellion. They have left their father's house, and exchanged its freedom and its security for the persecution and the contempt of men, who are irresponsible in the eyes of the world, and acknowledge no God but their own hateful passions.

To say that there has been a perfect parallel to this in the judgment with which God visited the people of England, is but to speak the truth for which every Christian blushes.

It is a useless task, and an unpleasant one, to dwell on the darkest pages in English history, and I need only speak of the corrupt, venal, infamous bishops of Elizabeth's reign, to show you that when the nation denied the supremacy of the Pope, it denied, at the same time, the whole truth of Christianity. In this respect, the Greek Church has been more fortunate than the Established.

For though the Greek Church has lost the principles of faith, and although it holds its doctrines simply at the wish of the Russian Emperors, still it has had the good fortune to preserve most Catholic traditionary doctrines, whereas in the English Establishment the most fundamental dogmas of Christianity have been denied, and avowed atheists are admitted to Communion, and to equal rights with the more orthodox members.

The very first act of the English Reformers was to sweep away altar, priest, and the ever adorable

Sacrifice of the Mass, and then one by one every other Catholic doctrine was denied, until, in the last century, Christianity was practically abolished, and every symbol of it was so clearly obliterated, that a stranger passing through the country would be forced to believe that Christianity had never been preached here.

And that wretched subservience exists even in our time. It is true that an effort is being made to reinstate the worship of Christ, but its promoters fail to see that until their Church is emancipated, Christianity can never flourish.

For example, it was only some years ago that the Gorham Judgment was pronounced, that Judgment which permitted Anglican Clergymen to deny Baptismal Regeneration. A weak protest was made at the time, and one of the Bishops introduced a Bill to Parliament to test the Bishops' exclusive judgment in matters of doctrine; but that Bill was rejected, as we are told, "with an overwhelming rejection, not only of opposition but of arguments. So utter was its defeat that it has never been heard of since. No one has ever ventured to introduce anything like it. The vice of the whole situation was so visible and so hopeless, that it has been left without an attempt to cure it."

Just imagine, in a Christian country, men supposed to be Christian Bishops, pleading before a half infidel Parliament for liberty to teach; imagine that half infidel Parliament rejecting that proposal contemptuously, and the Bishops submitting tamely, as if the most vital question of Christianity were not at stake.

Again and again those Bishops have met in Con-

vocation, but they have never uttered a single protest either against the Gorham Judgment, or the usurped jurisdiction of the State.

Then the Christian law of marriage was abolished by Act of Parliament, and polygamy was allowed by Bishop Colenso to the Christians of Natal. Then came the *Essays and Reviews,* one of whose Editors was raised to the Episcopal Bench, those essays which denied the truth of miracles, the prophecies concerning the Messias, the descent of all men from Adam, the fall of man and original sin, the Divine command to sacrifice Isaac, the Incarnation of our Lord and Savior, salvation through the blood of Christ, the Personality of the Holy Spirit, special and supernatural inspiration.

Convocation condemned the *Essays and Reviews.* But what is the effect? Not a single clergyman is prevented or can be prevented, from teaching this rank infidelity, for immediately after Convocation had uttered this condemnation, the Lord Chancellor declared in the House of Lords that Convocation possessed no such jurisdiction, and that the whole of it had been taken away and annexed to the Crown. And thus the Crown claims, and the claim is admitted, though unwillingly, supreme jurisdiction not only in temporalities, but in spiritualities. In other words, the Church is a mere creation of the State—a political engine, which, perhaps, serves to consolidate more or less the British Empire, but does not even claim to teach the doctrines of Christianity, but whatever is defined for it by the Crown.

There is one other Church which was threatened

with a like fate, but God mercifully spared it, and sent it a chastisement to cure its proclivity to schism. Owing to pernicious Gallican maxims the Church of France was fast drifting towards heresy at the end of the last century. Its members were engaged in paring down and minimizing the prerogatives of the Papacy, and attributing more and more spiritual jurisdiction to the State. It would only have required such an ambitious sovereign as Henry VIII., or Nicholas, to absorb all spiritual power and assume complete spiritual jurisdiction, when God's mercy was shown in the great French Revolution, which swept away altar and throne, and abolished the worship of God at the same time that it destroyed a dynasty of 1000 years.

Then, the eyes of the Bishops and clergy of France were opened to the truth that they had been building upon sand, and in their fearful distress they turned their eyes to that spot whence alone Christianity derives its stability, which Revolution and the mightiest social earthquake cannot shake much less destroy—Rome. And since that hour France has not only been faithful, but has been most devoted to the Holy See, and it was due in great measure to the perseverance and energy of the French Bishops that those Gallican principles, which for two centuries have been a constant source of annoyance to the Church, were declared heretical, and, therefore, untenable.

From those notable examples it is perfectly safe to conclude that for any Christian Church there is but one of two alternatives to choose, the acknowledgment of the supremacy of Christ's Vicar,

or abject submission to the State, and with that submission the loss of all Christian doctrine.

It is simply impossible for any Church separated from the rest of Christianity to maintain its independence of the State.

Before the days of Reformation there was no truth more clearly and practically understood than this, and whenever the Church had to complain of State encroachment, it appealed to the Chief Pastor, the Supreme Pontiff, and confided in him for protection. Such was the case in England when Henry threatened the liberties of the Church. Thomas, who then sat in the chair at Canterbury, opposed the King's unjust demands, and when harassed and persecuted, he appealed to Rome, and finally went to Rome, and laid his cause at the feet of the Pope.

And though Thomas at length was sacrificed, the Church was saved, and its freedom respected. And the tyrant felt the influence of the spiritual Power that rules the world, and was willing to bow before it, and beg its mercy by repentance. And from that time the Church retained its freedom, until another tyrant arose and found more pliant Bishops than Thomas, and the curse fell upon the Church, and it withered.

Let us examine the contrast. Let us put side by side with this weak subserviency, and the final death and decay of Christianity, the example of that glorious Church whose foundations are deep in eternity.

That Catholic Church, too, has been tried. Princes have been jealous of its power, and king-

doms have dashed themselves against it only to feel its power and their own weakness. It has been threatened, bribed, persecuted, all in vain. There is scarcely a nation in the world that has not tried to subject it to human control but has been baffled and defeated by it.

The skill of diplomacy, the threats of those in high authority, the power of armies have all been in vain. The Church of God is now untrammeled and unfettered by State despotism, and never shrinks from asserting, even with the blood of her children, her mission to teach the world, and, therefore, her destiny to be superior to the world.

And what is the result? Heresies have arisen. There has been a long line of heresies, but the Church has remained steadfast and resplendent, without change or shadow of change, ever the same, and perfect in its light as at the beginning. The errors of the human intellect have never fastened upon the supernatural intelligence of the mystical Body but every successive error has been expelled by the vital and vigorous action of the infallible mind and voice of the Church of God.

All its dogmas of faith remain to this hour incorrupt, because incorruptible, and, therefore, primitive, and immutable. The errors of men have been cast forth as human which are developed in the human system but cannot co-exist with the principle of life and health.

Anniversary of the Restoration of the Hierarchy (to England)[1]

We have been asked to commemorate to-day one of the most memorable events in the History of England, and in the history of the Catholic Church, and to express in the way best pleasing to Him our sense of thankfulness to Almighty God for the signal mercy He has bestowed upon us and our country, and the signal triumph He has given to His Church—I mean the reëstablishment of the Church in this country in the reëstablishment of the Hierarchy.

It is an event in itself altogether unique; we seek in vain in the history of the Church an event parallel to it. That England, the first nation of the civilized world—England that has done so much to promote the advancement of science—England, that has had such a large share in reclaiming the world from barbarism, should have to be treated by the Church of God as a missionary country in the middle of the nineteenth century is a fact of intense significance—a fact, that to a falsely educated mind suggests feelings of sorrow and humiliation, but a fact in which every rightly-balanced Catholic mind will discern the workings of God's right hand.

The rejection of the Catholic faith by England three hundred years ago; the conversion of Eng-

[1] Preached in Exeter.

land to the Catholic faith to-day, is simply the evolution of a design of God's Providence to promote the welfare, and to further the propagation of His Church on earth, to confound the pride and hypocrisy of men, and to exemplify the great truth that that which seems foolishness to the world is the highest wisdom of God.

The relations of England to the Church have been peculiar; she has ever been to the Church wayward, imperious, perverse, self-willed. The Church has undergone more vicissitudes in this country, and suffered severer trials than in any other; yet in her better hours it cannot be denied, England has made more than ample reparation for her willfulness; and this fact holds out to us a hope, that her three centuries of rebellion are now about to be atoned for by a perpetual union with the Church established by Christ upon earth, and that the nation at large, following the example of its best and most gifted children, will learn the uselessness of resistance to Heaven's will, interpreted by the authoritative voice of the Church on earth.

There is but one period in English history to which the English Catholic mind can revert with pleasure. He might call it the era of sanctity; for it was the time when the English Church was fertile in saints. The power which the Catholic Church at all times wields of converting men, not only from Paganism to Christianity, but from barbarism to civilization, of organizing society, of welding and consolidating into one form consistent whole elements apparently discordant and repellent, was strikingly exemplified in her ac-

tion upon the Anglo-Saxon races of England. Augustine and his monks came amongst the people, introduced the elements of civilization at the same time that they taught the rudiments of Christianity, established a monarchy, a Parliament that has since developed into the noblest and freest constitution in the world, took an active part in State affairs, thus insuring prosperity for the temporal interests of the State, whilst the spiritual life of the people was a daily growth of holiness, and God was worshiped by a simple, confiding faith, a deep-abiding hope, and a fervent, disinterested love, unknown in these degenerate days.

The Norman element was introduced, and with it the pagan pride that cannot brook control of any kind—the same pride that all times seeks to subvert the authority of Christianity and is the main cause of the great perpetual conflict which the Church has for ever waged, and must for ever wage, with the world. The Church, fulfilling her Divine Mission, had to side with the weak and oppressed against the strength of the persecutor; and though a compromise was effected with the new lords of England, and Churchmen took an active part in the administration of State affairs, there was no sympathy between the English Church and the proud Norman Conquerors, and to this, the first apparent breach between Church and State, we can trace the antipathy that has always existed, and which resulted in the total separation of England from the Catholic communion, and the State monopoly of all the Church privileges.

To every English Catholic mind, I suppose, the last three hundred years of our history is that por-

tion which it would most willingly forget; and though, as I have already said, God has evidently made use of the persecution to which His Church has been subjected as the means of her greater purification, it must always be a matter of regret that England was not chosen for a higher mission than that which was given to the Rome of the Cæsars.

We turn over with sorrow the pages of our history that are stained with the blood of martyrs, and on reaching the beginning of the present century, and reviewing the state of the Catholic Church in England at the period, we must admit that she fulfilled her mission of extermination to the letter, and that the violence of her persecution of the Church was superhuman, and would have been successful, were it not opposed by the higher superhuman power that has promised, and that maintains the Church's indestructibility.

In the beginning of the present century the Catholic faith in England was all but extinct. Catholics labored under a depression which they had not known before; their members were continually diminishing, their strength was daily decreasing. They labored under heavy disabilities; the penal laws were in full force; their religion was proscribed, and the practices of religion forbidden more sternly than in former years, and numbers of the landed aristocracy, who up to the very last moment had remained faithful to the religion of their fathers, out of pure weariness, conformed to the established Church, at the very time that God had determined to put an end to persecu-

tion, to give His Church a little breathing time, and work out her emancipation.

It was the Church's darkest hour preceding the dawn that has since broadened into perfect day. The small and scattered flock received at long intervals the consolations of religion from the proscribed priests who flitted about from city to city in the garb of menials: the Holy Sacrifice was celebrated hurriedly in the garret of a mansion, or some deserted outhouse in the back streets of a city; the old Episcopal Sees, worthily presided over in happier days by saints, were now filled by laymen, who derived the Apostolical succession through Queen Elizabeth, and traced their Orders to the imposition of her hands.

No further persecution seemed necessary; Catholicity seemed to be dying from sheer exhaustion, when suddenly the great reaction, caused by the horror of the world at the excesses of the French Revolution reached England and Ireland, and with the reaction came a purified spirit of liberty, that could love order and hate intolerance.

Venerable members of the House of Commons, whose minds did not keep pace with the times, but busied themselves with old-world visions, and seventeenth century traditions, were horrified when an Irish Catholic refused to take the Oath of Blasphemy that was tendered to him, when about to take his seat in Parliament, and they muttered strangely about the degeneracy of the age, and predicted sad days for England, when that same Irish Catholic, demanded in the name of a nation, and wrung from an unwilling Parliament and a

bigoted king, the measure of Catholic Emancipation.

Then the vitality of the Catholic Church became apparent. The pressure was taken away, and she sprang up with an elastic vigor, proportioned to the depth of her depression before. Churches were everywhere raised by her loving, generous people, who more than atoned for the sins of their country by their earnestness to promote the cause of God and His Church. Catholics whose existence and whose faith was never suspected before now, came forward to fill the Churches. Convents and monasteries were built, and the spirit of asceticism and self-sacrifice which lives wherever the Church breathes, soon filled them to overflowing. Colleges and schools were built, and formed centers of Catholic influence over the land.

Gradually the mists of prejudice cleared away from the minds of Englishmen, and, amazed at its recuperative power, they condescended to examine the tenets of the Catholic Church, and ended by being admitted into her communion. The Tractarian movement was daily sending into the fold of Christ men of highly cultured minds, and deep religious feeling. It was in truth the second spring.

But something was felt to be wanting. Quiet, patient souls, religious economists, as we might call them, who did not know what a gain it is to risk everything for Jesus Christ, were quite content to let matters run an easy course; but there were men throughout the land, full of holy zeal and ambition, who felt that the progress of Catholicity was retarded by the imperfect organiza-

tion of the Church in England, and that the time was come for the restoration of Catholic government and discipline.

All this time, events in England were being studied by Rome with daily increasing interest; and Pius IX., who has been to England another Gregory, by one of those sudden impulses that seem to defy human prudence, because they are caused by the workings of the Spirit of God, determined to restore the Hierarchy to England. For this purpose he established thirteen Sees, and for Metropolitan he chose Nicholas Wiseman, having first raised him to the dignity of Cardinal.

Religious feeling at the time was running very high in England. The whole Established Church was agitated by the question of Royal supremacy, first boldly raised by the Tractarians. For centuries, ever since Henry had constituted himself head of the English Church, it had been understood that all jurisdiction was vested in the Head of the State, and that the Crown was its ultimate Court of Appeal in all matters religious or other.

A few bold spirits, who were on the high road to Rome, had courage to deny this primary principle of Protestantism, and the question was warmly controverted between the High Church school, and what was called the Erastian party. The High Church party contended that the State had no authority in religious matters, and to claim supremacy was to usurp all Episcopal authority. The Erastians, more tenacious of their traditions, and more consistent, maintained that the authority of the Crown was the ultimate judge of all Ecclesiastical appeals.

While matters were in the critical state, and the Press, as is usual on such occasions, was every day growing more violently learned, and the Pulpits were ringing with declamation, and episcopal laymen were priding themselves on their newly acquired jurisdiction, and the State authorities were trying in vain to conjure up the ghost of Henry or Elizabeth, there was visible a more dreadful apparition than either, a Cardinal of the Catholic Church with thirteen Suffragan Bishops, and they brought their credentials from the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and the seal that was upon them was the seal of the fisherman. Each took his allotted place, and set about his work with calm earnestness.

For a moment the Protestant world was dumb with amazement; and then came a vehement outburst. Invective after invective was poured from the Press and from the pulpit; every weapon of language was used, or intended to be used, with deadly effect—Parliament was as agitated as when Cromwell and his Roundheads appeared to dismiss it peremptorily; the editors of the daily newspapers grew learned and prophetic, and rang repeated changes on every adjective of abuse in the English vocabulary; petitions for the annihilation of the Catholic bishops were sent from every Board of Guardians and Town Council in the Country; the Episcopal laymen of the Established Church issued charge after charge to their clergy, and every clerical inanity clamored about Papal insolence and Papal aggression.

A repetition of the Gordon riots was threatened; the more nervous amongst his friends advised

Cardinal Wiseman to go abroad, and it is said that one more nervous than the next, finding that all expostulations were useless, presented his Eminence with a coat of mail, and one of Colt's patent revolvers.

Even amongst Catholics, many were found to anticipate deplorable consequences. The restoration of the Episcopate to England was supposed to have been a very rash measure; at most it would be temporary, for it could not abide the fearful storm that had been raised against it, and it would be better, they thought, to yield to the prejudices of the English people, than to face them openly and disarm them.

The experience of twenty-five years has proved these apprehensions to have been unfounded and visionary; and though centuries must elapse before the importance of the work shall be rightly understood, we acknowledge the work to have been purely Providential.

Its success even in a quarter of a century has more than exceeded the hopes that were entertained of it. The Catholic Church in England now possesses a principle of unity and harmony that it did not possess under the old *régime;* its power of developing and extending itself was then unknown, and unused; large outlying districts that could not be brought under the superintendence of Vicars Apostolic, were subjected to the immediate jurisdiction of the newly appointed Bishops; ecclesiastical discipline, hitherto a dead letter, was now rigidly enforced; districts were divided into dioceses; cathedrals were built; diocesan chapters established; the prelates openly exercised their

prerogatives; it was the Catholic Church stripped, of course, of its privileges, but exercising all its faculties with fullest freedom.

As a solitary instance of the immense influence which the establishment of the Hierarchy exercised, we find that in 1862 in the diocese of Westminster the increase in the numbers of priests and religious establishments exceeds the return of the whole Vicariate of London in 1850; that whereas in 1850 there were 168 priests in the whole Vicariate of London, in 1862 there were 184 priests in the diocese of Westminster alone; in 1850, in the Vicariate of London, comprising the present diocese of Westminster and Southwark there were 19 houses of Religious; in 1862 in the diocese of Westminster alone there were 40; the increase in the number of priests in England between the years 1840 and '50, that is, during the years that preceded the establishment of the Hierarchy, was 246; the increase between the twelve years that immediately succeeded was 427.

Let these figures give us but a faint idea of the vast development of the Catholic Church in England under the government of its bishops. In the time that was chosen to reunite England with Christendom, in the men that were selected to accomplish the reunion, in the state of English feeling at the time, we behold a blending of circumstances most happily adapted for the success of the great movement; and the design itself, and its execution, we attribute to the direct interposition of Providence.

Of the power and influence of the Catholic Church in England to-day, it is impossible to form

an estimate. To judge by the alarms that are every day raised, we may reasonably say that her influence is felt in quarters unknown to Catholics themselves. Though steadily pursuing her great vocation to preach the gospel to the poor, she is daily winning over men of the highest learning and culture. Following the habit of the age, they yield themselves up, and are borne along passively by the current of modern thought, until at length the alternative stares them in the face, to drop anchor in the safe haven of Catholic truth, or drift out helplessly on unknown seas of doubt and infidelity.

England in the past had a destiny ignoble but useful to fulfill, and she fulfilled it. England has a mission yet to accomplish, not less useful, but more noble, and she will accomplish it. One thing is certain: that never again will she need a restoration of her Episcopate. The time of her probation and trial is passed, and she is now about to enjoy the fruition of the freedom of the children of God.

"I will close thy scar, and will heal thee of thy wounds," said the Lord, "Because they have called thee, O Sion, an outcast; this is she that hath none to seek her."

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